5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
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MEDICINE PIPES AND HEALING

THE person whom the whites term "medicine man" is called by the Blackfeet *Ni-namp'-skan*. Mr. Schultz believes this word to be compounded of *nin'nah*, man, and *namp'-ski*, horned toad (*Phrynosoma*), and in this he is supported by Mr. Thomas Bird, a very intelligent half-breed, who has translated a part of the Bible into the Blackfoot language for the Rev. S. Trivett, a Church of England missionary. These gentlemen conclude that the word means "all-face man." The horned toad is called *namp'-ski*, all-face; and as the medicine man, with his hair done up in a huge topknot, bore a certain resemblance to this creature, he was so named. No one among the Blackfeet appears to have any idea as to what the word means.

The medicine pipes are really only pipe stems, very long, and beautifully decorated with bright-colored feathers and the fur of the weasel and other animals. It is claimed that these stems were given to the people long, long ago, by the Sun, and that those who own them are regarded by him with special favor.

Formerly these stems were valued at from fifteen to thirty head of horses, and were bought and sold like any other property. When not in use, they were kept rolled up in many thicknesses of fine tanned fur, and with them were invariably a quantity of tobacco, a sacred whistle, two sacred rattles, and some dried sweet grass, and sweet pine needles.

In the daytime, in pleasant weather, these sacred bundles were hung out of doors behind the owners' lodges, on tripods.

6: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1967) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

In his report of 1888, Agent Baldwin was less optimistic about the agricultural possibilities on the reservation than he had been in previous years (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1888:150–152). The crops failed in 1889 and 1890, and in 1891 the agent reported that no crops had been planted in the past year either by Indians or by the agency because of fear of further drought (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1891:265).

In 1888 the agreement whereby the Blackfeet relinquished claim to the lands to the east of the present reservation boundary was ratified by Congress. In return the United States promised annuities, in the amount of $150,000 for a period of ten years, to be paid in the form of goods and services necessary for Indian progress toward civilization (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1888:303).

The first ration of cattle and horses under the agreement was issued in 1890. Agent John Catlin summed up the preceding five years of agricultural endeavor as "commendable," but wrote that the Indians had experienced failure "through no fault of their own." The Indian interest in stock raising led to his recommendation that grazing be given precedence over agriculture in future programs (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1890:114). Efforts to establish farming as an economic base had met with little success.

1892–1905 By 1892 the Piegan herd had been built up to 6,827 head of cattle and 4,616 head of horses. The Indians were moving out over more of the reservation and claiming land in anticipation of eventual allotment. They were beginning to establish herds, build houses and corrals, and to shift the emphasis of cultivation to raising hay for the stock (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1892:280–281, 807). Each subsequent report emphasized the suitability of the area for stock raising and reported a substantial increase in the Indian herds.

In 1898 a severe winter and a shortage of feed caused a 40 percent loss among the Indian cattle, and the irrigation engineer for the agency recommended extension of the irrigation canals in order to increase hay production (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1898:187–188). Indian ranchers, however, had a chance to recover from this setback. Additional cattle were included in the annual issues and stock raising continued.

An agreement for the sale of the Rocky Mountain portion of the reservation was approved by the United States government in 1896 (U.S. Statutes XXIX 1897:353). The conditions of the sale assured another ten years of annuities after the obligations under the 1887 treaty had been met.

By 1904 the agent reported a total of 20,509 head of cattle and 12,000 head of horses owned by the Blackfeet, and claimed that only 10 percent of Indian subsistence had been dependent upon government issues for that fiscal year (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1904:610–611, 600). Thus in the first two decades of dependency Blackfeet had tried farming and experienced failure. They were then encouraged to try stock raising and had begun to make some economic adaptation as herdsmen.

Their *cultural* readaptation, up to this time, had been less successful than the economic development. The increasing settlement of the lands around the reservation and the efforts of the police, as noted earlier, had ended horse raiding. Christian missions, particularly from the Roman Catholic church, had been

6: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1967) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

intermittently active among the Piegan for several decades, but Father Imoda had discounted their success at conversion prior to 1870 (Bradley 1923:316). In 1890 the Holy Family Mission school was opened in the Two Medicine valley (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1890:115) and in the following years Christianity gradually gained predominance over the Blackfeet religion. In the meantime, agents, missionaries, and teachers actively combatted any expression of many elements of Indian culture.

> Sun dances, Indian mourning, Indian medicine, beating of the tom-tom, gambling, wearing of Indian costumes . . . selling, trading, exchanging or giving away anything issued to them have been prohibited, while other less pernicious practices, such as horse-racing, face-painting, etc., are discouraged (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1894:159).

In addition, the children were forbidden to speak the Blackfeet language in the schools (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1893:174). Several informants, who attended either agency or mission schools during the first decades of the twentieth century, recall being punished for "speaking Indian" in the schools or dormitories.

The suppression of elements of culture that the white men thought were inconsistent with civilization did not eliminate the practices, but did hamper and limit their expression and transmission. The readaptation process was slow, but the agents usually found some grounds for optimism.

1905–1920 Progress in stock raising continued through 1905 and 1906. The agent persistently attempted to keep encroaching herds off Indian pastures, and continued a practice begun in 1904 of issuing leases and permits to both white and Indian stockmen for grazing privileges on tribal lands.[9]

The economic growth was again reversed by a severe winter in 1906 and 1907. The losses among the stock were heavy and "impoverished some of the industrious and worthy members of the tribe" (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1907:13–14). An investigation into conditions on the reservation was ordered, and the investigating officer's report sheds some light on the progress of economic adaptation to that time:

> He reported that the mixed bloods—about three eighths of the tribe—were able generally to take care of themselves, but the full bloods as a rule had little knowledge of ranch or farm work, were unwilling to stay a reasonable length of time in one place or to work where they could not be in parties, were very apt to quit on little or no provocation and regardless of the interests of the employer, . . . (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1907:13–14).

A federal act of March 1907 provided for the allotment in severalty of the Blackfeet reservation. Each tribal member would receive 280 acres of grazing land and 40 acres of irrigable land, or 320 acres of grazing land only. Surplus lands would be opened for public settlement. An appropriation was included for the construction of an irrigation system for the lands to be allotted; the money

[9] The first such permit recorded was for a five-year lease of 2,400 acres to the Conrad Investment Company (U.S. Comm. Ind. Affairs 1904:77). An increasing number of leases are reported for most of the following years.

6: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1967) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

dynamic one, and included remarks that were critical of his own candidacy or performance in office. On one occasion the interpreter gave introductory recognition to candidates who were unable to attend and commented that "your support at the polls would be most appreciated" by those candidates. People running for office draw upon ties of kinship that might have been overlooked or ignored in the recent past. It is often said that if you can get the support of a few key people you can be assured of the "full-blood vote," indicating the belief that kinsmen will vote with their family leaders.

People of both orientations attend church services according to individual interests and needs. Leaders of the different denominations actively proselyte among both unaffiliated people and the membership of the other churches. Interest in church attendance appears to follow the patterns indicated in the responses to my questionnaire where only three of the Indian-oriented and four of the white-oriented reported regular church attendance.

Rodeos and sports events are occasions for the largest gatherings which include relatively equal attendance and participation by people of both orientations. The rodeo attracts the largest crowds. These are public events open to all who buy a ticket and are given wide publicity; the participants are largely local people and drawn from both orientation groups.

People from both groups were seen in attendance at rodeos held in Browning and at Birch Creek during each summer of fieldwork. The informal grouping in the stands and around the grounds appear to be based on family and friendship ties. Families—parents, children and grandchildren—sit together. People apart from their families sit with their friends. In the rural areas, the spectators sit in cars and trucks, or stand around the arena. They cheer for their kinsmen and friends and jeer at the opposition; it is a lively and often moving crowd. Cultural orientations appear to operate in the smaller groupings that make up the larger crowds.

The sports events draw smaller numbers of people than do the rodeos, but the nature of participation and attendance is similar. One such event, an elementary school track meet I attended, appeared particularly noteworthy because it is comparable in many respects to the Easter Egg Hunt described later in this section.

This track and field meet between the Browning and neighborhood elementary schools was an activity in which children took part without regard to the orientation of their families. It was held at the Browning High School track on a cold, blustery spring day and people of both orientations attended—parents, teachers, and track fans. Informal groupings by family and friends were noted here too, but it was a moving crowd and interaction patterns were hard to identify.

Various other public ceremonies attract participants and on-lookers from all segments of the population, usually on the basis of who has an interest in the particular event scheduled. I recall two such occasions: a ceremony honoring an Air Force contingent from Malmstrom Air Force Base near Great Falls in 1959 and the dedication of a War Veterans memorial by the War Mothers on the grounds of the Museum of the Plains Indian in 1967. Both ceremonies were held on the Museum grounds and drew participants from both orientations—Tribal Councilmen, Honorary Councilmen, the American Legion Color Guard, and in the

[i.e., White vs. Indian-orientation--Analyst]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

10: Black Robe Medicine Men

THE LARGEST of the Piegan bands prior to 1846 was the Small Robes. Indians of this band kept to themselves and seldom met with the other bands of their tribe. George Catlin and Father De Smet even considered the Small Robes a separate Blackfoot tribe.[1] Before the great smallpox epidemic in 1837, this band may have numbered as many as 150 lodges, of which about half survived that great plague. The Small Robes usually hunted near the Three Forks and south of the Missouri. This was the country visited by the Flatheads when they crossed the Rockies on periodic buffalo-hunting excursions. The strong and independent Small Robes dared to make friends with the little Flathead tribe, enemies of the other Piegan bands. They hunted with the Flatheads on the plains and occasionally journeyed over the mountains to visit and trade with them in their Bitterroot Valley homes. At these times they sent scouts ahead to inform the Flatheads of the approach of a friendly party.

Probably the Small Robes were the first Blackfoot Indians to find out that the Flatheads were acting very strangely. They were reciting peculiar prayers in an odd language. They were making peculiar signs, crossing themselves in front of their chests. They were setting aside one day in every seven as a rest day, on which hunting, fishing, trading, and moving camp were forbidden. Each seventh morning the Flatheads assembled to listen to a moral talk by Old Ignace Lamoose, an elderly Iro-

[1] Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, I, 52; De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, III, 949.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

quois Indian who had settled among them. His speeches were interspersed with singing and dancing in a great circle. Yet the remainder of this Flathead holiday was spent in traditional enjoyments—gambling and horse racing. It was those morning performances that were so strange.

Old Ignace had been the leader of a little group of Iroquois, probably Mohawks, who had made the long trek westward from the valley of the St. Lawrence prior to 1830. Perhaps they had been encouraged to migrate by earlier Iroquois travelers who had gone west as canoemen for the fur traders. Ignace's party settled among the friendly Flatheads and tried to teach them some of the elements of the Christian religion they had learned at the Jesuit Mission of Caughnawaga, near Montreal.

But Old Ignace was not satisfied with his own imperfect efforts to interpret Christianity to the pagan Flatheads. He encouraged the Flatheads to sponsor delegations to the Jesuit headquarters in St. Louis to ask for a missionary. In the summer of 1835, Ignace took his two sons on the long overland trek to St. Louis, where he asked that a priest be sent to his western Indian friends. When two years passed and no priest came, Old Ignace again led a deputation toward St. Louis. Journeying eastward from Fort Laramie in company with a party of white men, they met a Sioux war party. The Sioux ordered the whites to stand aside, then killed Ignace and his four Indian comrades. Possibly the murderers mistook them for Shoshonis, their enemies.

Two more years passed. The original Iroquois contingent among the Flatheads was reduced to four. But they would not abandon their quest for a missionary to their friends. In the summer of 1839 two of them, Peter Lefthand and Young Ignace, volunteered to make the long trip to St. Louis. They journeyed through hostile Indian country down the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, in company with friendly fur traders. This time the Iroquois were successful. After receiving assurances that a priest would be sent to the Flatheads the following spring, Peter set out alone to carry the joyous news to his adopted people. Young Ignace accompanied Father Pierre Jean De Smet, a brave and

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

vigorous Jesuit who had been selected by his order for this assignment, across the plains and mountains in the spring of 1840. De Smet met the Flatheads and was impressed by the opportunities for missionary work in this virgin field. Then he returned to St. Louis.[2]

In the fall of the following year Father De Smet was back in the Flathead country, bringing with him two black-robed assistants and three lay brothers. Among the Flatheads they founded the first Roman Catholic mission in the great northwest. There, on Christmas Day in the year 1841, the first Blackfoot Indian converts to Christianity were received in baptism by Father De Smet. He said they were "an old chief of the Blackfeet nation . . . with his son and little family, five in all."[3] The chief received the Christian name of Nicholas. We don't know his Indian name, but it is most probable that he was a member of the friendly Small Robes band of the Piegans. Later that winter about twenty Blackfoot Indians visited the Flatheads, and Nicholas aided in instructing them in Christian teachings.[4] Nicholas, the enthusiastic convert, spread the word among his people on the plains. In February, 1842, De Smet wrote:

> We are informed that he and his companions have spoken so favorably of prayer and the Blackrobes, that already the Sunday is religiously observed in the camp where Nicholas resides, and that a great chief, with the people of sixty lodges, intend shortly to make our acquaintance and attach themselves to the Flatheads.[5]

Perhaps the good priest's enthusiasm caused him to underrate the animosity of the other Piegan bands toward his Flathead friends. He was to learn that even among his beloved Flatheads, the power of the Prince of Peace was strangely interpreted. These

[2] John C. Ewers, *Gustavus Sohon's Portraits of Flathead and Pend d'Oreille Indians, 1854*, Smithsonian Institution *Miscellaneous Collections*, CX, No. 7, 54-63.
[3] De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, I, 338.
[4] *Ibid.*, I, 364.
[5] *Ibid.*, I, 364.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Indians looked upon Christianity as a war medicine more powerful than any they previously had possessed. A series of seemingly miraculous victories by small Flathead parties over larger enemy forces, following Flathead conversion, appeared to strengthen the Indians' faith in the practicality of this new medicine. And even their Blackfoot enemies were beginning to think that "the medicine of the Blackrobes was stronger than theirs."[6]

Father De Smet had great admiration for his Piegan friends of the Small Robes band. It must have been a great shock to him when he received word of their disastrous defeat at the hands of the Crow Indians. In October, 1846, De Smet wrote, "The year 1846 will be a memorable epoch in the annals of the Blackfeet nation. . . . The Crows have struck them a mortal blow—fifty families, the entire band of the Little Robe, were lately massacred and 160 women and children have been led into captivity."[7] It was this action the fur trader Denig probably referred to in 1854:

> The Crow Indians a few years since, after killing all the men and boys of 50 lodges of the Blackfeet, took prisoners upward of 200 women and children. One of our gentlemen now in charge of that nation was with the Crow camp when the battle took place, and for two or three months afterwards, during which time he sought occasions to liberate about 50 women and send them home to their people.[8]

Serious as this loss to the Small Robes was, the massacre was not as complete as De Smet's first report indicated. Either part of the band was not engaged or many escaped with their lives, for the Small Robes band survived. It numbered some thirty lodges in mid-century and was mentioned by a number of later observers. However, the Small Robes never regained a position of prominence in the tribe.[9]

[6] *Ibid.*, II, 589.
[7] *Ibid.*, II, 524, 593.
[8] Denig, *Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*, B.A.E., *46th Ann. Rept.*, 551–52.
[9] John C. Ewers, "Identification and History of the Small Robes Band of the Piegan Indians," *Journal* Washington Academy of Sciences, Vol. XXXVI, No. 12.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Father De Smet recognized that the continuous state of war between the Flatheads and the Blackfeet was a threat to the survival of the much smaller Flathead group and an impediment to the civilization of both Indian peoples. He was delighted by an opportunity to arrange a peaceful meeting of these warring Indians in the fall of 1846. That summer Chief Victor led his Flathead tribe to the plains to hunt buffalo. There they were joined by twelve lodges of Small Robes. While on this hunt they encountered and defeated a superior force of Crow Indians. The Small Robes fought valiantly to revenge the recent massacre of their kinsmen. But after the battle they attributed the victory to the prayers of their Flathead comrades. They begged Father De Smet to let them become his followers and presented all their children to him for baptism.[10]

Flushed with success, the Flatheads met the host of Blackfeet in the great camp of Big Lake, Piegan chief. During the ensuing peace council, Chief Victor spoke of his achievements in war, modestly attributing his successes to the assistance and protection of the Black Robe's God.[11] His recent victory over the Crow Indians was confirmed by the Small Robes. The words of this small, middle-aged man must have made a strong impression on the many stalwart Blackfoot warriors who listened to them.

On September 15, Father De Smet held mass in the Piegan camp, where more than two thousand lodges were assembled, including Piegans, Bloods, Northern Blackfeet, and Gros Ventres of the Plains, and Flatheads and Nez Percés from west of the Rockies. The next day he composed a chant for the Piegans which he had translated into the Blackfoot language:

God Almighty;
Piegans are all his children
He is going to help us on earth;
If you are good, he will save your soul.

From a Blood Indian leader De Smet learned that there were

[10] De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, II, 574–80.
[11] *Ibid.*, II, 593.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

already a number of baptized children in that tribe. He was told that some sixty children among the Northern Blackfeet had been baptized by a Black Robe from Red River and that they wore crosses at their necks.[12] They were probably converts resulting from the labors of Father Thibault, who four years earlier had accepted an invitation from John Rowand, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, to come to Fort Edmonton to serve the Crees and half-blood residents in that vicinity.[13]

Confident he had concluded a lasting peace between the Flatheads and Blackfeet, De Smet returned to the east. He left his associate, Father Nicholas Point, to continue missionary work among the Blackfoot tribes. This French priest, a gifted artist as well as a zealous churchman, worked diligently among the Blackfeet for eight months. Making his headquarters at Fort Lewis, the American Fur Company's post on the Missouri, Father Point baptized twenty-two Blackfoot children, then extended his labors to the camps of the hunting bands, spending several weeks in each. Through his skill in portraiture he won the interest and friendship of the chiefs. He held daily classes in Christian doctrine for each of three groups—men, women, and children. With the help of an interpreter he translated the ordinary prayers into Blackfoot and taught them to these groups so that they could recite them from memory. He wrote Father De Smet, "There is scarcely any camp among the Blackfeet in which the sign of the cross is not in veneration."[14]

Although Father Point performed and recorded no fewer than 651 baptisms among the Blackfeet, all but 26 of that number were children. Only 4 were men.[15] Point found that the adult Indians looked upon him and his new religion much as they had always regarded their own medicine men and their magic. They believed he could cause disease or make thunder to roll if he became angry. They thought that baptism, like the native sweat lodge, would insure bodily health. They believed he possessed

[12] *Ibid.*, II, 593-94.
[13] MacInnes, *In the Shadow of the Rockies*, 268.
[14] De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, III, 950.
[15] Gilbert J. Garraghan, *Chapters in Frontier History*, 149.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

the power to cure sickness and implored him to treat them. Father Point found the prominent men unwilling to accept his criticisms of their polygamous marriages. Ambitious young men, accustomed to seeking economic security and social advancement through raids on enemy tribes, would listen to his pleas for peace with neighboring peoples only if he could "immediately make Great Men of them." Sadly, he wrote to Father De Smet:

> I could have baptized a great number of adults; they even seemed to desire it ardently; but these desires were not yet sufficiently imbued with the true principles of religion. I could not content myself with the persuasion generally existing among the savages, that when they had received baptism they can conquer any enemy whatsoever. The courage and happiness of the Flatheads have inspired them with this belief. This explains why some wretches, who seek only to kill their neighbors, were the first to petition for baptism.[16]

The good Father would not compromise with his high principles. The stubborn Blackfeet were not convinced of the error of their heathen ways. So matters stood between the advocate of the Prince of Peace and the warlike Blackfeet when Father Point left the trading post by barge to return down the Missouri to civilization on May 19, 1847.

It was twelve years before the "Black Robe Medicine Men," as the Blackfeet called the Roman Catholic missionaries, returned to found a more permanent mission among these Indians. Meanwhile, the Blackfeet continued their raids on the camps of their neighbors—Crows, Assiniboins, Crees, Pend d'Oreilles, and the peacemaking Flatheads as well. Peace-minded chiefs could not prevent their young warriors from crossing the mountains to make life miserable for the small western tribes. Even before Father Point had left the Blackfoot country, warriors were fighting the Pend d'Oreilles, and soon thereafter they resumed raiding the Flathead camps.[17]

[16] De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, III, 953-54.
[17] *Ibid.*, III, 951.

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Their failure to obtain the Black Robe's powerful war medicine did not shake the Blackfoot warrior's faith in their own. Nevertheless, at least one young man found a way to gain the advantages of the forbidden power on his own.

Big Plume (born about 1830) accompanied a war party to capture horses. He was one of the youngest members of the group. When they neared the enemy camp, the older men told the younger ones to wait outside the camp while they stole into the village to get horses for the entire party. While he waited outside the field of action, Big Plume fell asleep. When the veteran horse thieves led horses from the camp, all the young men except Big Plume ran to join them.

When Big Plume awoke and realized he had been left behind, he began to cry. But he saw it was nearly daybreak. So he jumped up and ran to get away from the hostile camp as fast as he could. At dawn he crawled into a badger hole, where he hid for the rest of the day. When night came, he started running again in the direction of his distant home camp. Running and walking, he covered as much ground as possible. Toward morning he came to some thick brush and hid in it the following day. There he fell asleep.

As Big Plume slept, a handsome white man wearing a canvas shirt appeared to him and comforted him, saying, "Don't be afraid. Don't cry any more. You will get home safely."

That night he traveled on. Again, as morning approached, he hid in some brush and went to sleep. The same man came to him, wearing a blue shirt, and said, "Don't worry. You'll get home safely." On the day following another night's travel this man came to him once again in his dreams. This time he was wearing a red shirt. He seemed to smile as he spoke his assuring words. Big Plume thought he looked like the Lord.

Another night's journey brought Big Plume to the Yellow Mountains. A fourth time he saw the man in his dreams. This time the man was wearing a skin shirt with holes in it and crosses painted on it. He said, "Don't be afraid. I am the Lord. I am

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

sorry for you. You will get home and you will live to be an old man."

After Big Plume reached home, he made the skin shirt just as he had seen it in his dreams. He wore this perforated shirt with the red crosses painted on it to war. Big Plume was successful and became a leader among his people. When Big Plume grew old, his brother-in-law, Bear Chief, asked him for this shirt. Four times Bear Chief made this request before Big Plume said to him, "Make me a sweat lodge. I shall pray to the Lord and tell Him I am giving Bear Chief his shirt because I'm too old to use it."

After he had transferred the shirt to Bear Chief, Big Plume told him, "This summer you will go to war and will meet the enemy. All the others in your party will run away. You will have to fight them alone."

That summer Bear Chief's war party sighted a lone enemy in the distance. All his comrades ran away. Bear Chief put on his sacred shirt and prayed to the Lord for help. He sang the song Big Plume gave him, "All the other Indians are babies." Then he charged the enemy. His shirt was shot through front and back, but Bear Chief was not even scratched. Later Bear Chief carried this shirt on horse raids. When he wore it into the enemy camps, they could not see him. One time he wore the shirt in a battle with the Crow Indians. They shot at him but could not hit him.

This famous shirt became one of the most coveted garments among the Piegans. Although the original shirt is said to have been sold to George Bird Grinnell by Bear Chief, it was remade at least three times. One of these versions, owned by the late Albert Mad Plume in 1951, is shown in one of the illustrations in this book.[18]

In 1859, with the active encouragement of Blackfoot agent Vaughan, himself a Protestant, a Jesuit mission was founded on

[18] Chewing Black Bones, a Piegan, owner of the second version of this garment, told me the origin and history of The Lord's Shirt in 1951. The third version is Cat. No. LB1-1-p in the Denver Art Museum.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

the Teton River near present Choteau. It was moved several times in the next few years and abandoned in 1866, because of Blackfoot hostilities toward the whites. In 1875, Father Imoda, who had been associated with this mission since its founding, summed up its meager achievements thusly:

> Some two thousand have been baptized in the various bands, some marriages solemnized, and in a few isolated cases a slight impression made upon their religious convictions, but except these slight results, the state of religion among the Blackfeet is about where it was when they first came under the notice of white men.[19]

North of the International Line, Father Lacombe labored tirelessly and fearlessly in the years following 1865. He lived in the camps of both the Blackfeet and their Cree enemies, ministering to their physical needs through epidemics and to their spiritual ones even in the midst of their intertribal battles. In 1871 he devised a picture chart to help explain Christianity to the Blackfeet. It proved so useful that Pope Pius IX had several thousand copies of the chart printed for use in Roman Catholic missions among primitive peoples in different parts of the world.[20]

The Roman Catholics were not alone in their efforts to bring Christianity to the Blackfeet. These Indians readily distinguished between the "Black Robe Medicine Men" (Catholics) and the "Short Coat Medicine Men" (Protestants) on the basis of their clerical garments. It was much more difficult for them to understand the significant differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant doctrine. They were confused by the competition between Christian missionaries of different sects.

If the progress of the Black Robes was slow, that of the Short Coats was no more rapid. Rev. Robert T. Rundle, a Methodist, went west to Fort Edmonton in 1840 to minister to the Blackfeet,

[19] Bradley, "Manuscript," *MHSC*, Vol. IX, 315–16.

[20] Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe, The Black-robe Voyager*, 201–203.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Assiniboins, and the half-bloods and whites at the trading post. He made little impression on the adult full-blood Indians.

In the summer of 1856 the Presbyterian Board of Missions sent thirty-year-old Rev. Elkanah Mackey to Fort Benton. His advent was long remembered by the Blackfeet, primarily because he brought his wife with him. She was an object of great curiosity among the Indians, for she was the first white woman to appear in the Blackfoot country. Rev. and Mrs. Mackey were provided quarters at the fort and began to make arrangements for establishing a mission. The Indians treated Mrs. Mackey with kindness and respect. But she was unhappy in the wilderness, so far from any other woman of her own race. Besides, she was pregnant, and there was no trained doctor within many hundreds of miles of Fort Benton. After a stay of one month the couple returned to the East.[21]

Thirty-seven years passed before a permanent Protestant mission was established among the Blackfeet in present Montana. Meanwhile, Rev. J. W. Tims inaugurated mission work for the Anglican church among the Northern Blackfeet in Canada. He made a thorough study of the Blackfoot language and published a pioneer book on the subject. But he was nine years in obtaining his first convert.[22]

Why was progress in Christianizing the Blackfeet so slow? Surely it was not due to any lack of zeal on the part of the early missionaries. Nor were the Indians unfriendly toward them. Certainly the Blackfeet did not lack serious interest in religion. Religious symbolism permeated many of their activities, and they actively sought supernatural aid to help them in their daily lives as well as in times of crisis. But a wide gulf separated the alien religious symbols and moral concepts of the missionaries from the familiar ones of the Indians. The Blackfoot Indians could not readily abandon the faith of their fathers for this strange new religion.

[21] Guy S. Klett, *Missionary Endeavors of the Presbyterian Church Among the Blackfeet Indians in the 1850s*, Presbyterian Historical Society, 338-41.

[22] Rev. J. W. Tims, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Blackfoot Language in the Dominion of Canada.*

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

forwarded to Washington, ratified by the Senate on April 15, 1856, and proclaimed by the president of the United States ten days later. Although known to the white man's official records as the Treaty with The Blackfoot Nation, this first official negotiation with the United States has been remembered among the illiterate Blackfoot Indians as "Lame Bull's Treaty."

Lame Bull, also known as Lone Chief, was head chief of the Piegan tribe and first Indian signer of the treaty. He was chief of the Hard Top Knots Band which Stanley estimated at one hundred lodges in 1853.[32] Lame Bull was both a distinguished warrior and a skillful diplomat. He was the leader of the small Piegan trading party encamped near Fort McKenzie which was attacked by a large Assiniboin and Cree war party in the summer of 1833.[33] Twenty-one years later (in March, 1854) he led a large Piegan war party against the Crow Indians.[34] Yet Governor Stevens found him to be sincere in his desire to live at peace with other tribes.

In mid-September, 1856, Rev. Mackey met Lame Bull at the mouth of the Judith River, where the Blackfeet were awaiting the arrival of annuities due them under the terms of the 1855 treaty. When the Presbyterian missionary asked this chief if he would permit white men and women to establish a mission among his people, Lame Bull expressed his personal willingness, but wished to consult the other chiefs before making a decision in a matter of such importance. The next day he told Mackey he had brought the matter before all the chiefs in council and that they were agreeable to the proposal. With dignity the philosophical old chief explained,

> We are satisfied that white men are our friends, if they were not they would not go to the trouble of sending us so many valuable presents each year. We desire them to come and teach us about the Great Spirit & tell us plenty of good things. When we catch

[32] *Pacific Railroad Reports of Explorations and Surveys*, I. 449.
[33] See the description of that battle on pp. 62-63 of this book.
[34] James Doty to Isaac I. Stevens, December 20, 1854, Indian Office Records.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

> a wild animal on the prairie & attempt to tame him we sometimes find it very hard. It may take a long time & a great deal of patience. But almost any animal can be tamed by kindness & perseverance. We have been running wild on the prairie and now we want the white sons and daughters of our Great Father to come to our country and tame us. . . . We have a fine country & we are not ashamed to have white men come & see it.[35]

The following year Lame Bull's band was hunting buffalo near the Sweetgrass Hills. Amid the dust of the chase Lame Bull's horse was attacked by an enraged buffalo bull. The horse fell. Lame Bull's ribs were crushed and his neck broken. According to one Indian account, Lame Bull was buried on a platform inside his lodge and twenty of his horses were killed for his use in the afterworld. According to another story, the body of this great chief was taken to Fort Benton and buried there by the whites.

My older Piegan informants said that Lame Bull was about sixty years of age when he was killed. Although physically small, this courageous veteran of many intertribal wars and staunch advocate of peace with the whites had great influence among his people. Had he lived, his example and wise counsel might have helped to minimize interracial tensions in the Blackfoot country during the difficult decade that followed.[36]

Many of the other Piegan band chiefs who placed their marks on the 1855 treaty died equally violent deaths. Big Snake (rattlesnake), chief of the Small Brittle Fat Band, loud-mouthed announcer in the tribal summer encampment and prominent war leader, was killed in a battle with the Cree Indians near the Cypress Hills in 1858. Little Dog, Governor Stevens' favorite, chief of the Black Patched Moccasins Band and successor to Lame Bull as head chief of his tribe, was murdered by his own

[35] Klett, *Missionary Endeavors of the Presbyterian Church Among the Blackfeet Indians in the 1850s*, Presbyterian Historical Society, 343-44.

[36] When President Franklin D. Roosevelt was inducted into the Blackfoot tribe during his visit to the Glacier National Park in 1934, he was given the name "Lone Chief," in honor of this great leader, the first signer of the first treaty between "The Blackfoot Nation" and the United States.

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for the civilization of his Indian charges. Vaughan had served for fifteen years in the Indian Service. He had been agent to the Upper Missouri tribes since 1852 and knew a great deal about the Assiniboins, Crows, and Western Sioux from intimate contacts with them during that period. Ten days before his departure from St. Louis to become father to the Blackfoot tribes, on May 30, 1857, Vaughan wrote Father De Smet urging him to establish a mission among the Blackfeet which would advance the interests of the government and those of the Indians at the same time. Although Vaughan was a Protestant, he expressed the belief that "Catholic missionaries have always succeeded in gaining the Indians' hearts, in controlling their brutal outbreaks and ameliorating their condition in every respect."[7]

Although Vaughan by no means limited his activity to the distribution of the government's bounty among the Indians, he paid strict attention to the practical problems of distributing the annuities equitably and of suggesting substitutions in annuity goods to eliminate useless items and provide ones which would be more appreciated by the Indians. Shortly after he reached the Blackfoot country, he consulted with the Gros Ventre and Blood tribes and found that they cared little about the coffee furnished them and would prefer corn to rice.

When the annuities arrived in 1858, Vaughan employed a simple but ingenious method of assuring their fair distribution among the multitude of Indians who assembled to receive them:

> Having first ascertained the exact number of lodges by a bundle of sticks given me at my own request by the head men of the band, each stick indicating a lodge or family, I placed the representatives of the various lodges in a large circle, the presents to be distributed forming its centre. To each individual in this circle or ring was given in turn his just and due proportion, as nearly as the nature of the goods would permit, of every article of merchandise sent to the agency.[8]

[7] De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, IV, 1317.

[8] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858, 77.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

ington had been common policy for many years, but never before had Indians from so great a distance made the long trek east to see the Great White Father, nor on so great a scale as Vaughan suggested. This recommendation, like his request for cattle, died in the office of the commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Vaughan was pleased when, in 1859, the Jesuits accepted his long-standing invitation to establish a mission among the Blackfeet. That summer Father Hoecken and Brother Magri traveled with the Indians. Then they built three log cabins on the Teton River near present Choteau, where they spent the winter studying the Blackfoot language and catechizing some Indian children from the winter camps near by.[20]

The Major was pleased also when the first steamboat ever to reach Fort Benton, in the summer of 1860, carried three hundred uniformed soldiers of the United States. This first large body of soldiers to reach the Blackfoot country merely passed through it. From Fort Benton they proceeded westward over the Rockies, following the newly located Mullen Wagon Road. Nevertheless, Vaughan believed the sight of so many troopers would cause the Indians to "respect and fear the government accordingly."[21]

When the Civil War broke out during the next year, Major Vaughan had to be replaced. Vaughan was a Virginian, and there was no place in the government service for a potential southern sympathizer. It was a long time before the Blackfoot Indians received another "father" who was as sincere, able, and experienced as Major Vaughan, who, at the age of sixty, left the Blackfoot country. Eight years later he returned to help the government make treaties with the Blackfeet, Gros Ventres, and Crows.

Under the "fatherhood" of Major Vaughan (1857–61), the Blackfeet made no great strides toward the civilization which Governor Stevens had so glibly prophesied for them. Vaughan had seen to it that they received the annuities promised them under the terms of the treaty, had shown them that crops could be grown in their country, and had encouraged them to try farm-

[20] William N. Bischoff, *The Jesuits in Old Oregon*, 86–87.
[21] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1860, 83.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

report was false remained in the valley until they were overtaken by a severe snowstorm. They might have starved had not Little Dog, faithful friend of the whites, volunteered to hunt for them. In spite of the severe weather Little Dog managed to kill antelope and bring in the meat to feed the stricken miners.

His kindness contrasted sharply with the actions of an Indian-hating white man, John Morgan, who lived in a house on Sun River that winter. When four Piegan warriors paid a friendly visit to his home, Morgan enlisted the aid of a party of near-by prospectors to help him get rid of his Indian visitors. One of the red men was shot attempting to escape. The other three were hung from a convenient tree. Unknown to the executioners their cold-blooded actions were seen by a passing group of Piegans, who reported the murders to their people.[14]

In April a large revenge party, believed to have been North Piegans led by their chief, Bull's Head, attacked the Sun River farm, burned the buildings, and killed one of the two attendants. When George Wright, the new Blackfoot agent, visited the farm the following September, he found "the general appearance is that of desolation." The buildings were destroyed, the farming implements were gone, and the fields were overgrown with weeds. Emigrants passing along a near-by road had taken most of the rail fencing.[15] Thus the first noble experiment in demonstrating the advantages of the farmer's life to the buffalo-hunting Blackfeet ended in utter failure.

Nor was the agency farm the only symbol of civilization to fall before the vengeful Piegans. The Jesuit missionaries, then established on Sun River, had unwittingly given shelter to the wretched Morgan. The Indians shot several cattle belonging to the mission and killed the herder. On April 27 the priests abandoned their mission and moved to safety west of the Rockies. Father De Smet, at Fort Benton in June, wrote, "A fresh and furious war has broken out between the whites and the Black-

[14] Bradley, "Manuscript," *MHSC*, Vol. IX, 251-54.
[15] George Wright to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 14, 1866, Indian Office Records.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

feet, in which again the whites have given the first provocation, and our Fathers have been obliged to withdraw for the moment."[16]

Meanwhile, Little Dog, the only Blackfoot Indian who had shown any real interest in farming, continued to try to live up to his promise of peace with the whites professed at two treaty councils. In the month of May, not long after he had brought twelve horses stolen from the whites by the Piegans in to Fort Benton and turned them over to Acting Agent Upham, Little Dog and his family left the fort to return to the camp of their people. About three miles from the town he was overtaken by a party of drunken Piegans, who murdered both the old man and his son. Not satisfied with having killed their head chief, the murderers proceeded to mutilate his body with butcher knives. In reporting this incident to Washington, the agent stated his belief that Little Dog and his son were killed "because they were suspected of being too friendly with the whites."[17] So strong was Piegan animosity toward the whites that some of them regarded their peacemaking head chief as a traitor and removed him from his influential position with finality.

In spite of their new troubles with the whites, the warlike Blackfeet did not forget their long-standing quarrels with neighboring tribes. Indeed, since the 1855 treaty, the Piegans had added another tribe to their long list of enemies—their long-time allies, the Gros Ventres on Milk River. In 1861 a Pend d'Oreille raiding party from west of the Rockies had stolen horses from the Gros Ventres. In an effort to throw their pursuers off the track, they abandoned some of the stolen animals in the vicinity of a Piegan camp on the Marias. When the Gros Ventres found these horses they did not wait for an explanation, but attacked the Piegan camp.[18] The Piegans did not retaliate in force, but were content to raid the Gros Ventre camps in small

[16] Bischoff, *Jesuits in Old Oregon*, 89-90; De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, III, 858.

[17] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, 203; *The Montana Post*, June 9, 1866.

[18] Bradley, "Manuscript," *MHSC*, Vol. IX, 313-15.

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THE BLACKFEET [ca. 1860–1875]

657 The Blackfoot, Blood, and Sarsi tribes were assigned a common reserve on the north side of the Bow and South Saskatchewan rivers. But the three tribes did not get on well together. In the next year the Blood Indians were transferred to a new reserve on Belly River. This Blood Reserve remains the largest Indian reservation in the Dominion of Canada. The North Piegans were placed on a smaller reserve near the Porcupine Hills on Oldman River, west of Fort Macleod.

224 So long as there were wandering herds of buffalo to be followed, the boundaries of their reserves meant little to these Indians. The Canadian Blackfoot tribes continued to hunt on their ceded land and to cross the "medicine line" both to hunt and to
721 trade. Despite the vigilance of the "Red Coats," their wild and ambitious young men continued to capture horses from enemy camps and cleverly to evade the Mounties in bringing them home safely.

648 South of the "medicine line" in Montana Territory, the movement toward law and order proceeded more fitfully. Our government was experimenting with a new Indian policy. President Grant's administration, after the movement to place the Indian Bureau under the army had been defeated in Congress in 1870, decided upon a policy of feeding the warlike tribes of the West
657 instead of fighting them. Under this new "Peace Policy," as it
● 797 was commonly known, Indian agents were to be appointed upon the recommendation of organized church groups. It was expected that this restriction would insure the appointment of honest, dedicated agents. In the division of tribes among the Christian denominations, the Blackfeet fell to the Methodist Episcopal church, even though there never had been a Methodist missionary among these Indians in the United States.

657 During the early years of this idealistic arrangement the character and ability of Blackfoot agents showed no improvement. Few able, honest men cared to play the role of "father" to a people reputed to be the most bloodthirsty Indians of the northwestern plains for the petty salary of $1,500 a year. But there was no dearth of incompetent applicants for the post. Between

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[ca. 1860-1875]

WHISKY TRADERS, REDCOATS, AND THE LAW

September, 1870, when Lieutenant Pease was relieved of duty by army orders, and late January, 1875, the Blackfeet had four "fathers." The first served less than three months before he was under fire from the Republicans of the territory. Governor Potts declared, "His character is such that he ought not to hold the office even if a Republican." His successor was removed because he drank to excess. The next agent resigned under suspicion of having diverted Indian supplies to the store of a private trader, and the fourth was discharged for incompetence. When John McDougall, himself a Methodist missionary from Canada, visited the agency on the Teton in the spring of 1874, he was shocked by what he found. "It is no wonder that Uncle Sam was constantly having trouble with his native wards. The Government and the Indians were, both of them, looked upon by the ordinary Government employee as legitimate prey."[22]

McDougall also paid a short visit to the wide-open town of Fort Benton. He observed that "the wildest thing in this big country . . . was the ordinary white man."[23] Two years earlier another Methodist missionary had reached a similar conclusion. In 1872, William Wesley Van Orsdel, a young, vigorous lay preacher from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, had gone west to the agency on the Teton to found a mission among the Blackfeet. This robust, intelligent, and sympathetic Pennsylvania Dutchman had no difficulty at all in making friends with the Blackfeet, who came to call him "Big Heart." Together, he and the Blackfeet sang songs and discussed religion. The Indians told him their origin legends, and "Big Heart" told them the equally dramatic Old Testament stories, which he believed were particularly well suited to the understanding of the nomadic Indians. He and the Indians agreed that there was no real conflict between Napi, the traditional Blackfoot creator, and the white man's God. But this open-minded missionary soon realized that little could be done for the Indians until the moral ideals and practices of their white neighbors improved. So "Brother Van," as he was affection-

[22] McDougall, *On Western Trails*, 143.
[23] *Ibid.*, 145.

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ately known throughout Montana, devoted the rest of his very active life to founding churches and preaching a message of tolerance and interracial understanding among the whites. Not until twenty-one years later was a permanent Methodist mission founded among the Blackfeet in Montana.[24]

At Lame Bull's Treaty in 1855, Governor Stevens had talked of schools for the Blackfeet, but it was not until the fall of 1872 that the first school was opened at their Teton River agency. Then curious children flocked into the brand-new schoolhouse, sat down, looked around, and walked out. None of them attended with any regularity until some white children from the families of agency employees started school.[25] Still the number of Indian pupils remained pitifully small. Regular attendance was impossible because their parents spent most of the year hunting buffalo far from the agency. The average daily attendance during the first quarter of 1874 was twenty–four whites, six half-bloods, and ten Indian children.[26] Progress of the Indian children was painfully slow. As their teacher could not speak their language, she used pictorial charts which were first explained to the white children and the half-bloods in English. Then the bilingual half-blood children explained them to the full-bloods. A Blackfoot agent, interested in showing the effectiveness of his school's teaching methods, reported, "I held up my hat and the school as with one voice said 'hat.' So with slate, pencil, book, pen and the pictures of dog, cat, horse, cow, etc. It was a very satisfactory evidence of progress."[27]

In 1875 the agent enthusiastically reported that he had succeeded in getting the children to wash and comb their hair before entering school. The pupils were singing hymns "with great taste and correctness." Girls were receiving instruction in cutting and sewing, and they appeared to be making rapid progress in their studies. Boys, however, were very irregular in at-

[24] Stella W. Brummitt, *Brother Van.*
[25] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1873, 252.
[26] School Report, Blackfeet Agency, First Quarter 1874, Indian Office Records.
[27] John Young to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 1, 1878, Indian Office Records.

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Eagle, with the help of white men, built two log cabins on Birch Creek, and White Calf, the head chief, followed their example. By summer there were ten Indian cabins on the reservation and these cabin-dwellers had planted forty acres of potatoes and turnips. My older informants said that most of these pioneer Piegan farmers were members of Running Crane's band, whose garden plots were on Badger Creek very near the agency. Although Young was proud of these achievements, he managed to temper his report of these humble beginnings with a realistic appraisal of the future.

> To extend these improved matters and make them permanent will require time, patience, and discretion. Many difficulties lie in the way. The Indians have no correct notion of continuous labor. It is rare for the same Indian to work for more than a few days at a time, and he is apt to stop as the whim or notion moves him.[12]

Agent Young dealt with many other problems involving his "children" which were not directly related to the major one of getting them to settle down and try to make a living at civilized pursuits. These problems involved their spiritual welfare, their physical health, their education, their tribal government, their relations with the traders, and even the relocation of the agency.

Young felt strongly that the lack of missionaries handicapped his efforts to civilize "these savages." He complained bitterly that the large Methodist missionary societies, which "do so much for India and China," had totally neglected the Blackfeet, even though this reservation had been assigned to their denomination. He organized a Sunday school and was delighted to hear the women in the brush cutting firewood "enliven their toil by singing our Sabbath-school tunes." But he felt the need of a full-time missionary to help eliminate the Indians' "superstitious practices" in such practical ways as by inducing them to see the physician at the agency when they became sick rather than to call upon the traditional medicine man.[13]

[12] *Ibid.*, 1878, 84.

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[ca. 1875–1885] THE TAIL OF THE LAST BUFFALO

Meanwhile, Roman Catholic missionaries, denied access to the reservation by the fact that it had been officially designated Methodist territory, traveled with the Blackfoot hunting bands and performed baptisms and marriages among them. In 1881, Father Prando built a small chapel on the south side of Birch Creek. The Indians could go to him, but he was forbidden to cross the river to pursue his work on the reservation. By that time some of the Piegan bands had settled on Birch Creek near this mission station and had become ardent followers of this priest. When, in the fall of 1883, a senatorial investigating committee visited the reservation, it found that head chief White Calf's principal complaint against Agent Young was his refusal to allow the Jesuits on the reservation.[14]

By 1878 top-level Indian Bureau administrators were convinced that the civilization of the Indians could be brought about more speedily through the education of their children than by any other means. On the Blackfeet Reservation in the late seventies they had little opportunity to prove their theory. The great majority of the Indian families spent too little time near the agency. When they were near by, the school was crowded. When they folded their lodges and went on a buffalo hunt, the children went with them, even though a few ran away from their families and returned to school. Of the twelve hundred Indian children of school age in 1878, only twenty boys and thirty girls attended school for more than one month, and only two children learned to read and write during the year.[15]

Both children and adults were reluctant to speak the English words they knew, fearing that they would be laughed at if they mispronounced any of them. At the same time, the Indians laughed loudly at the crude and halting efforts of the whites employed at the agency to speak Blackfoot.[16]

The investigating committee in 1883 found that the school teachers, the Misses Young, daughters of the agent, were "most

[13] *Ibid.*, 1877, 132; 1879, 91.
[14] Bischoff, *Jesuits in Old Oregon*, 90–91, 100.
[15] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1878, xxiv, 83, 288–89.
[16] *Ibid.*, 1877, 131.

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to the Catholic school at St. Ignatius Mission. Some of them were among the forty-five children who comprised the first Blackfoot students to be sent to the famous Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania in 1889. 871

In the next three years opportunities for schooling increased rapidly. In September, 1890, the new Holy Family Mission School opened on Two Medicine River with accommodations for one hundred pupils. In 1892 a new government industrial school was opened at the former military post of Fort Shaw on Sun River and sixty Piegan children were enrolled. And that same year a new boarding school was opened on Willow Creek, west of present Browning. By 1894 three-quarters of the children of school age were in school.

The Indian boarding school took upon itself the difficult task of impressing upon the Indian child the superiority of the white man's values. Learning to be "civilized" meant learning a host of little things—to comb one's hair, to wear a coat, trousers, and shoes, to sit in a chair and sleep in a bed, to use a knife and fork, to tell time, and much more. In McGuffey's classic graded readers, the Indian child was exposed to the white man's strange code of ethics as he learned to read. As he progressed through the grades, he thrilled to *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. The Indian boy learned to milk a cow, to drive a team of horses, to build a fence, to care for livestock, and to plant, cultivate, and harvest crops. The girl learned to cook strange foods, to launder clothes, make dresses, and perform general housework according to the white housewife's standards. Both boys and girls learned to honor the American flag and to appreciate the symbolism of such great national holidays as the Fourth of July, George Washington's birthday, Christmas, and Easter. Thus, the work of civilizing Indian children required much more than constant drill in the three R's. It required painstaking indoctrination in the basic fundamentals of the white man's culture. 872 177

The task of civilizing adult men and women was much more difficult. Blackfoot agents had received very little assistance 177 797

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from Christian missionaries. In 1890 the census estimated that "5 per cent of these Indians are Roman Catholics and the others are sun worshipers."[19] Not until three years later was a permanent Protestant mission established on the reservation. Then Rev. and Mrs. Dutcher built a Methodist church on Willow Creek near the boarding school.

Meanwhile, some of the agents charged with the difficult task of reporting the Indians' progress toward civilization were not satisfied with the results they could obtain by example and persuasion alone. They offered bribes or threatened punishments in their efforts to destroy the symbols of the Indians' savage life which were distasteful to them. Disregarding the time-honored American principle of freedom of religion, they directed their attack primarily against the Indians' tribal ceremonial, the sun dance. In 1887 Agent Baldwin ordered members of the Indian Police not to participate in or to encourage this ceremony. He exacted a pledge of each Indian who received a brood mare from the government that he would take no part in the sun dance. Consequently, there was no sun dance the following summer.[20] Major Baldwin also pointed with pride to the fact that he had required all members of the Indian Police to cut their hair and to "abstain from the objectionable habit of painting their faces."[21] Friends of the Indians prevailed upon Washington officials to remove this hostile agent.

Yet, six years later, Captain Lorenzo Cook, another strict disciplinarian, ordered two sun dance lodges used in previous years to be torn down and the timbers used for erecting branding corrals. He prohibited not only the sun dance but "Indian mourning, beating the tom-tom, gambling, and wearing Indian costumes" as well. And he tried to discourage "less pernicious practices such as horse racing." Captain Cook even asked the traders not to stock the paints Indians used for painting their faces.[22] Short

[19] *Report of Indians Taxed and Not Taxed*, U. S. Bureau of Census, 360.
[20] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, 151-52.
[21] Mark D. Baldwin to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 1, 1886, Indian Office Records.
[22] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1894, 159.

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chase)."[123] These numbers appear to be extreme but they are borne out by information recently gathered in the field by the writer. One informant told of her great-grandfather, Chief Many Horses, who had twenty wives. This was in about 1855. Our material therefore suggests that the sharpest spurt in the increase in wives occurred after 1833, a period which coincides with the increase in the buffalo hide trade both in Canada and The United States.[124]

The possession of a large number of wives was a source of wealth and was therefore cherished by the Blackfoot. The missionaries learned this when they attempted to suppress polygyny. Said a Blackfoot chief,

> "Tell the priest . . . that if he wishes to do anything with my people he must no longer order them to put away their wives. I have eight all of whom I love, and all have children by me—Which am I to keep and which to put away? . . ."

The traveler, the Earl of Southesk continues,

> "This chief however injured the moral force of his remarks by going on to say that his eight wives could dress a hundred and fifty skins in the year whereas a single wife could only dress ten, supposing that she was always well, and that such a loss was not to be thought of."[125]

Since wives had to be paid for in horses we must briefly consider the relation of this expansion in polygyny to the accumulation of horses and the growth of herding. We know that the Blackfoot first obtained their horses from the Shoshone in 1730. When Henday visited the Piegan in 1754 he described them as mounted but makes no mention of herds.[126] The same applies to Cocking's description of the Blackfoot in 1774.[128] In 1787 Thompson describes Blackfoot horses and though he does not specifically mention herding he states that he saw a group of thirty horses and a dozen mules at the camp at which he was staying.[127] In 1800 Thompson was again with the Blackfoot but he recorded nothing new on this matter. But in 1808 Alexander Henry, the younger, writes, " . . . some of the Blackfoot own forty to fifty horses. But the Piegan have by far the greatest numbers. I heard of one man who owns three hundred . . . ."[128] By 1833 we find that Maximilian reports as many as 4000 and 5000 horses owned by one wealthy

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[123] Sir Cecil Denny, *The Law Marches West*, p. 51.

[124] There was a great disproportion in the sex ratio due to the increased casualties in warfare. In 1847 Father Point estimated that between two thirds and three quarters of the adult population were women. See DeSmet, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 952.

[125] Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, p. 155.

[126] Henday, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-338.

[128] Cocking, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[127] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

[128] Henry and Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

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175 completely cowed the Piegan. If any resistance on their part had been
648 contemplated, it never materialised. As Curtis wrote:

> "A study of the Piegan conflict with the white people, either citizens or soldiers, shows that, considering their number and their provocation, they were one of the most harmless tribes."[20]

Canada

It was not until after 1870 that the Blackfoot felt the force of white expansion in Canada. Blackfoot country had remained free from settlers. The North Saskatchewan, the main highway of traffic to the northwest, was north of Blackfoot country. So long as the Hudson's Bay Company retained its trade monopoly, the Blackfoot were free to continue their old life. But the days of the company were limited. In response to an increasing pressure for a national policy to deal with the growing westward expansion and immigration, Alberta and Saskatchewan were ceded to the Canadian government by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870.

With the passing of political authority of the Hudson's Bay Company, there came an end to the harmonious relations with the Blackfoot in
175 Canada. A period of free trade now set in.
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> "New and reprehensible practises in trade were introduced. Competition was keen. Trader outbid trader and upset the century old values fixed by the Hudson Bay Company. Alcoholic spirits, long discontinued by the company . . . for many years now poured in from Red River and from across the border. In southern Alberta, American whiskey runners from Montana introduced the lawless spirit of the American frontier. Contemptuous of Canadian authority, they built forts in Canadian territory, and debauched the Indians with alcohol."[21]

In 1872, Colonel Ross was sent west by the Canadian government to investigate. In his report he recommended that police be sent to put down the liquor trade:

> "The demoralization of the Indians and injury resulting to the country from this
579 illicit traffic are very great. It is stated upon good authority that during last year (1871) eighty-eight (88) of the Blackfoot Indians were murdered in drunken brawls amongst themselves, produced by the whiskey and other spirits supplied to them by the traders. At Fort Edmonton during the present summer whiskey was openly sold to the Blackfoot . . . by some smugglers from the U.S. . . .".[22]

● 797 In the same year, John McDougall, a missionary, visited the Blood, promising that the whites would soon bring law and order. He later arranged to meet Crowfoot, head chief of the Siksika, and told him that the

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[20] E. S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, Vol. 6, p. 7.
[21] Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
[22] Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

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the further disruption of their intertribal unity by the fur trade, as was pointed out in the preceding section.

Of no less importance, was the conciliatory role played by the chiefs and headmen, who very often did not consider it to their personal interests to resist the influence of the whites. The early missionaries first commented upon this when they recorded the support they received from the chiefs in their efforts to suppress intertribal warfare and horse stealing. Father Point stated: "Among the Blackfoot, the rich people who undertake to rebuke the wicked who possess nothing, have naught to gain and all to lose."[29] Indeed, peace would insure the security of those who had large herds.

Opposition, both to the cessation of the raiding parties and to the signing of treaties with the whites, came from the younger men. However, they were for the most part, successfully restrained by the chiefs. While it is true that Little Dog, head chief of the Piegan, was killed by his own warriors for his council of peace and friendship with the whites in 1860, Crowfoot, who had much more influence, was successful in keeping down hostile movements against the whites. Crowfoot, who was largely responsible for the maintenance of peace, was motivated by personal, and to some extent tribal, interests. He prophesied the extinction of the buffalo and the ensuing dependence of the Indians upon the whites, and looked upon resistance as foolhardy and hopeless. In 1876, he told Denny, a member of the mounted police,—

> "We all see that the day is coming when the buffalo will all be killed, and we shall have nothing more to live on and then you will come into our camp and see the poor Blackfoot starving. I know the heart of the white soldier will be sorry for us, and that they will tell the Great Mother who will not let her children die."[30]

In 1877, he won out against those who counseled against the signing of the treaty. In 1882–83, he allayed the resentment of his people incurred by the putting through of the Canadian Pacific railroad. Without the consent of the other chiefs, Crowfoot secretly capitulated to the railroad for a personal annuity of $700.[31] He was able to mollify the embittered chiefs by judiciously distributing horses. Again, in 1885, Crowfoot used his influence to keep the Blackfoot out of the Riel rebellion, but he played upon the fear of the whites to get a promise of larger rations in the future.

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[29] DeSmet, *op. cit.*, p. 980.
[30] Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
[31] *Richardson, Mss.*

12: Hanks & Richardson E,P-5 (1938, 1939) 1966
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through the power of the elders over the transmission of property, the old have increased their power.

This general increase in authority of the aged has not been made without sacrifice in some spheres. Specifically, the final economic and political authority now lies with the agency. However, within the frame of white authority many decisions remain in the hands of the extended family. Among these are the choice of residential site on unoccupied land, caring for the aged beyond the allotted rations of food and clothing, designating among the group of dependents those who shall carry out specific duties, and the management of certain undertakings such as trapping and horse raising. The missionary schools have assumed control over the young children and now sanction, and even try to arrange, the initial marriage of a young man with a girl ready to leave the school. However, the head of an extended family may exert influence after the school years are over and select mates for subsequent marriages of his kinsmen. At the same time the younger, active men are usually in immediate control of farm production, the cattle, and the labor in the agency-operated coal mine. Indeed, there have been many instances of reserve cleavage based on the interests of the young "progressives" as pitted against the old conservatives. However, though the young speak vehemently in meetings against the authority of the old, when the issues call for action, few turn against the venerated authority of the elders.

III. Northern Blackfoot Kinship Terms*

1. nae'ze, "my grandparent."
   (a) Male of father's family or its collateral who is older than father; his wife.
   (b) Female (and her husband) of father's family or its collateral who is of father's generation or antecedent generations (note exception under 5d, 6d and 7c).
   (c) Mother's father and his sibling; his or her spouse; mother's mother and her female sibling; her spouse.
   (d) Sister considerably older than ego (alternative form, cf. 5).
   (e) (Male speaker.) Wife's mother; wife's father; wife's father's sibling or his or her spouse; wife's mother's sister or her spouse.
   (f) (Female speaker.) Member of husband's family older than husband; his or her spouse.
   (g) (Rare with female referent.) Descendant of the female line of father's sister; her husband.
2. nin.'a, "my father."
   (a) Father; comrade of father, i.e., age mate of father (cf. 16).
   (b) Husband of mother's sister.
   (c) (Male or unmarried female speaker.) Husband of a female in mother's generation who is a descendant of mother's parents' sibling.

* All terms, once defined according to Blackfoot usage, will be so used in defining additional terms.

14: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1960) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

[1884-1960]

175 In 1898 a severe winter and a shortage of feed caused a
657 40 per cent loss among the Indian cattle, and the Irrigation Engineer
233 for the Agency recommended extension of the irrigation canals in order
[242] to increase hay production.[105] Indian ranchers, however, had a chance to recover from this setback. Additional cattle were included in the annual issues and stock raising continued.

648 An agreement for the sale of the Rocky Mountain portion of the
175 reservation was approved by the United States government in 1896.[106]
425 The conditions of the sale assured another ten years of annuities after the obligations under the 1887 treaty had been met.

657 By 1904 the Agent reported a total of 20,509 head of cattle and
433 12,000 head of horses owned by the Blackfeet, and claimed that only
[233] 10 per cent of Indian subsistence had been dependent upon government issues for that fiscal year.[107] Thus in the first two decades of dependency the Blackfeet had tried farming and experienced failure. They were then encouraged to try stock raising and began to make some economic adaptation as herdsmen.

177 Their cultural readaptation, up to this time, had been less
[555] successful than the economic development. The increasing settlement of the lands around the reservation and the efforts of the police had ended horse raiding, thus eliminating an important avenue to prestige.
[797] Christian missions, particularly from the Roman Catholic church, had

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[105] Ibid., 1898, p. 187-188.

[106] U.S., Statutes at Large, 1897, XXIX, p. 353.

[107] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, op. cit., 1904, pp. 610-611, 600.

14: McFee E-4,5 (1959-1960) 1971 NP6 Blackfoot NP6
Piegan
Montana

[1884-1960]

177 been intermittantly active among the Piegan for several decades, but
[797] Father Imoda had discounted their success at conversion prior to
[871] 1870.[108] In 1890 the Holy Family Mission school was opened in the Two Medicine valley,[109] and in the following years Christianity gradually gained predominance over the Blackfeet religion. In the meantime, Agents, missionaries and teachers actively combatted any expression of many elements of Indian culture.

> Sun dances, Indian mourning, Indian medicine, beating of the tom-tom, gambling, wearing of Indian costumes . . . selling, trading, exchanging or giving away anything issued to them have been prohibited, while other less pernicious practices, such as horse-racing, face-painting, etc., are discouraged.[110]

[191] In addition, the children were forbidden to speak the Blackfeet language in the schools.[111] Several informants, who attended either Agency or Mission schools during the first decades of the twentieth century, recall being punished for "speaking Indian" in the schools or dormitories.

The suppression of elements of culture that the white men thought were inconsistent with civilization did not eliminate the practices, but did hamper and limit their expression and transmission. The readaptation process was slow, but the Agents usually found some grounds for optimism.

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[108] Lt. James H. Bradley, "St. Peter's Mission," Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana, Vol. IX (Helena, Montana: State Publishing Company, 1923), p. 316.

[109] Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, op. cit., 1890, p. 115.

[110] Ibid., 1894, p. 159.

[111] Ibid., 1893, p. 174.

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Case No.	Indian Dance	Stick Game	Indian Societies	Indian Accent	Level of English	Church Attend.	Reading	West. Dance	Cards	Western Organi-zations	Visibility (A=High)
2	attend				good	reg.	A		occ.	X	C
3					good	rare	B		X		B
5	attend-	X-			good	occ.	C		occ.		C
6	attend-				good	occ.	A	X	occ.	X	D
7	attend-				exc.	occ.	A	X	rare		D
9	attend				fair	occ.	A				B+
10	X	X	X	X	fair	reg.	C	occ.	occ.		A
11	attend	X			good	occ.	C		occ.		B
13	attend-	X			fair	occ.	A	X	X	X	B-
14	X	X	X	X	fair	reg.	C	occ.			A
17					good	rare	B	occ.	occ.		B
18	attend-	X	X		good	occ.	C	?	occ.	X	A
19	X-				exc.	occ.	A	X		X	C+
21					good	occ.	A	X		X	D
25	attend-				good	reg.	A	X	occ.	X	B
26	X	X		X-	good	occ.	?		X-		B+
27	attend	X		X	fair	occ.-	D				A
28	attend-				good	occ.	A	occ.			B
29	attend-	X-			poor	rare	B				A
30					exc.	occ.	B		occ.		C-
31	attend-				good	occ.	A		occ.		C
32	attend	X-		X	fair	occ.-	B	occ.			A
34					good	reg.	A	X	occ.		C
35	X	X-	X		good	occ.	A	X	X	X	D
37	attend-			?	fair	occ.	C		occ.		A
38	attend-				good	reg.	B	X			B+
39	attend			X	fair	occ.-	C				A
42	attend-				good	occ.	B	X	X	X-	C
45	attend-				good	occ.	C		occ.		C-
46	attend-				fair	occ.	B		occ.	X-	C-
47	X	X	X	X	fair	reg.	D		X		A

[535] [525] [515] [91] [47] [535] [524] [575] 106 121 177 184

106 separation, travel, better education, or some other factor which
121 might be important.
177
184 The "Level of English" ratings, of course, are relative; those
[191] among the sample who speak least fluently are rated "fair" because people are known, outside the probability sample, who are much less fluent in their use of English. A "poor" rating is left open for such people.

[797] Church Attendance is included in the table because it is hoped that attendance at Christian services might give an index of variable commitment to Christian religion, as well as provide a measure of some typical interaction patterns. The most frequent rating in the column, "occasional" attendance, a translation of responses such as "once in a while," or "every now and then," does not appear to have diagnostic value. There remains a possibility that this information, expanded by available additional data, may have some significance when put within the context of sociocultural configurations that will be analyzed later.

[535] Western Dance is included to assess participation within a white social context and the ratings are self-explanatory.

[524] Cards, or card playing, has been mentioned previously and will be examined later if it is found to be a part of any meaningful configuration.

[575] Western Organizations membership is expected to indicate greater interest in activities related to white culture and possibly, according to the particular kind of organization--Veterans' clubs, Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, Masons, and similar lodges--give clues to striving for upward mobility within American society.

177 People say that if you can get the support of a few key people you
184 can be assured of the "full-blood vote," indicating the belief that
666 kinsmen will vote with their family leaders.
602

Church Services

177 People of both orientations attend church services according
184 to individual interests and needs. Leaders of the different
797 denominations actively proselyte among both unaffiliated people and the membership of the other churches. Interest in church attendance appears to follow the patterns indicated in the responses of the members of the probability sample, where only three of the Indian-oriented and four of the white-oriented reported regular church attendance.

Funerals

177 From reports, funerals were attended by family and friends,
184 and in this context kin ties and the personal characteristics of the
764 deceased were more influential than cultural orientations in decisions as to whether or not to attend.

Rodeos and Sports Events

177 Rodeos and sports events were occasions for the largest
184 gatherings which included relatively equal attendance and participation
541 by people of both orientations. The rodeo attracted the largest crowds. These were public events open to all and were given wide publicity; the participants were largely local people and were drawn from both orientation groups.

Missouri. When Father De Smet established a Catholic mission among the Flathead in 1840, the Small Robes visited it and came under his influence, offering their children for baptism. (Ewers, 1946, p. 398). 175 648 [797]

In the year 1845, the Small Robes suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Crows. De Smet at first believed all of their men were killed in the action. But it developed that a small remnant remained. A dozen lodges of them joined the Flathead in their fall buffalo hunt in 1846, during which this allied force met and defeated the Crow. (Ibid., p. 398). 175 648 721 727

It is my belief that the strongest claim the Blackfeet had to the area around the headwaters of the Missouri, rested upon occupancy by the Small Robes band of the Piegan in the decades of the 1830s and 1840s. But it is clear the Small Robes were not the sole occupants; that they shared the resources of the region in buffalo with their Flathead friends. This region thus became something of a common hunting ground before it was declared such by the terms of the 1855 treaty. 131 175 [648]

During the period between the smallpox epidemic of 1837 and the treaty of 1855 there also appeared to be a growing tendency for the Northern Blackfeet to remain north of the international boundary in the British Possessions. This appears to be indicated in the description of the territory of the three Blackfeet tribes [164]

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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nessed.[1] In the early part of the nineteenth century, when Fort Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House were built as trading posts, many changes occurred. Iron blades were substituted for stone. Guns replaced to a large extent the bow and arrow. Woollen blankets and red woollen cloth became parts of Indian costume. Coloured beads frequently supplanted dyed porcupine quills. In order to gain these new possessions, the Blackfoot began to kill buffalo at a greater rate. To their subsistence needs was added the exchange motive with its waste of key resources. A more sinister influence of the whites upon tribal social life was disease; periodic epidemics visited the Blackfoot and left the smokeless tipis of entire bands in camp formation to disintegrate on the prairie. Liquor was a powerful disrupter. Father Scollen, an Oblate missionary, wrote in 1876 a letter from Fort Pitt to the Governor of Manitoba describing the scene as he had observed it: ". . . hundreds of poor Indians fell victims to the white man's craving for money, some poisoned, some frozen to death while in a state of intoxication and many shot down by United States bullets."[2] The Blackfoot herds diminished, and murderous drunken brawls were frequent. These, however, were superficial changes. When sober, the survivors of a drinking party went again on the warpath. Buffalo were still the main means of subsistence, and each year the circle of the Sun Dance camp was formed when the saskatoons were ripe in the thickets along the river.

The first whites scarcely attempted to alter the lives of the Indians. Most of them were traders, and as long as good profits came in, they did not disturb the source of their golden eggs. Indeed, it was considered especially dangerous for Americans to enter Blackfoot territory. Lewis and Clark were advised to cross the mountains to the south in order to avoid encountering Piegan war parties.[3] The Jones and Immel expedition, sent out by the Missouri Fur Company, was slaughtered in 1823, probably by Piegan warriors.[4] Many an early fort on the Missouri River was burned and its inhabitants massacred. The black-robes were in equal danger: Father

[1] *York Factory to the Blackfoot Country, the Journal of Anthony Hendry, 1754-55*, ed. by Lawrence Burpee (*Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1907, 3rd Series, vol. I, sec. 2). *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest. The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, 1799-1814*, ed. by Elliott Coues (New York, 1897).

[2] Alexander Begg, *History of the Northwest* (Toronto, Hunter Rose, 1894), vol. II, p. 128.

[3] Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 1905), vol. V, p. 206.

[4] H. M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York, Francis P. Harper, 1902), vol. I, p. 330.

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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de Smet had to abandon St. Mary's mission in Montana in 1850.[1] Only in the sixties and seventies could such men as Father Lacombe and Father Scollen[2] undertake prolonged social relations with the Blackfoot. Though they attempted to participate in the affairs of these people, they could do little more than talk with them and pray for the dying. Through their influence an uncertain peace was concluded between the Plain Crees and the Blackfoot, during which the young men merely turned elsewhere for booty. These "peace" interludes were always of short duration, frequently ending with a planned slaughter of Crees lured into camp for the purpose. Despite an increasing number of white settlers, Indian life persisted in its old forms, and not until the coming of herders and agriculturists were the beginnings of social upheaval clearly felt.

In the midst of such a life, with no observable necessity for change, it may be asked why the Blackfoot agreed to sign a treaty which dispossessed them of their land and was to alter their lives profoundly. Indeed, the signing of a treaty with Indians who permitted few whites to enter their territory and who had as late as 1870 planned a raid on Fort Edmonton was a mission that Governor Laird and Colonel J. F. McLeod did not accept lightly. Four factors may be seen: (1) the character of Chief Crowfoot; (2) his appreciation of white strength and his tendency to accede to white demands; (3) the conception of the treaty on the part of the Indians; (4) the pressures at the moment of signing.

Crowfoot was chief of the Moccasins band of the Blackfoot. At twenty this wiry little man gave up the war party after a good but not outstanding record of deeds in battle. He had galloped in the face of gun-fire to strike the tipi of the head chief of the Crow. In hand-to-hand combat he had wrested a gun from a Flat Head. He had built up through raids a sizable herd of horses. Some time during these years of fighting his knee was injured, which had made the long days of walking to enemy camps difficult, if not impossible. Hence, with a good record as a war chief, he settled down to the routine life of the camp. Then, having acquired a reputation for generosity, he assumed, in the regular Blackfoot pattern, the duties of chief and provider for his own band.

In 1865, Father Albert Lacombe first visited the Blackfoot camps as a missionary and became acquainted with Crowfoot. During this

[1]Tom Stout, ed., *Montana, Its Story and Biography* (Chicago, American Historical Society, 1921), p. 154.
[2]Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe, the Black-robed Voyager* (Montreal, Moffat, Gard, 1911), p. 107 ff.

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visit the Cree suddenly attacked. Crowfoot participated as a defender of the camp, and the good Father distinguished himself for bravery under fire. After the battle Lacombe gave aid to the wounded and baptized the dying. A few years later when smallpox plagued the Blackfoot camps, Father Lacombe returned to say a prayer for the dying and to bury the dead. For such deeds he received from the Blackfoot the name "Kind-hearted Person."

It is beyond question that Crowfoot and many other Blackfoot admired this white man. Though Miss Hughes's biography of Lacombe does not mention it, our Blackfoot informants state that a close friendship developed between the black-robe and Crowfoot, with whom he frequently lived. We may speculate that during the days in Crowfoot's tipi the priest was asked why he had come to the Indians and was cross-questioned on Christian ideals. We imagine that Lacombe replied by emphasizing the brotherhood of man, that all should live side by side in peace, each aiding the weaker. At first Crowfoot may have been puzzled by these concepts, for the doctrine of survival through individually acquired supernatural power was ingrained in his thinking. Yet in a way these statements could be comprehended, for the priest who practised constant self-abnegation had demonstrated "power" to withstand bullets. Just as the owner of a Medicine Pipe had the protection of thunder power by following the ritual of the Pipe, by never saying the word "bear," and by keeping the Pipe in a quiet spot in the tipi, so Father Lacombe must have been given power by his God to withstand bullets and disease because of living a life of help to other people. Kindness and generosity within the tribe was also a *sine qua non* of Blackfoot authority, and Lacombe certainly exemplified these two major attributes of native chieftainship.

Such thoughts may have entered Crowfoot's mind, when Father Lacombe described the way to gain help from God. In any case Crowfoot soon attempted to carry into practice certain Christian-like ideals. He ordered that all horses seized in raids from the Crees by members of the Moccasin band be returned. He himself adopted a Cree girl in his loneliness after the death of his son.

Though for a time he was unable, outside the circle of his immediate followers, to carry into practice his idea about returning horses, Crowfoot's forcefulness in meetings of the chiefs, his kindness, and his generosity began to distinguish him throughout the entire tribe. With the death of Big Three Suns and Many Swans during and after the smallpox epidemic of 1870, Crowfoot, despite a war record

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incentive to participation would be absent. Accordingly, Crowfoot was urged to help to abolish the torture ceremony, though death spared him the embarrassment. In 1890 Indian Agent Magnus Begg took matters into his own hands. He rode up to the Sun Dance lodge at the height of the activities, and, fortified by the sanctions of the Church of England in the person of the Reverend J. Tims, asked the chiefs to stop this part of the ceremony. To the amazement of these two men, the request was complied with immediately.

Capitalizing on the Blackfoot's deep-lying interest in the supernatural, the clergy was constantly proselytizing. Unlike their Protestant brethren, the Roman Catholics did not stress the dichotomy of Christianity and Indian beliefs. Rather they permitted these ignorant children of God to follow their own ways, subtly fostering at the same time a greater dependence on the Church and sending their souls onward, purified by the baptismal rites. The unbending Protestant, however, insisted that a man could not worship fetishes and the omnipotent Christian God at the same time; moreover, the Indians were also expected to part with their extra wives before entering the church. Such abnegation required greater conviction than most Indians had. Few Indians could face the tribal rejection that occurred when a wife was sent away for this reason and sacred bundles destroyed. Converts were for the most part unsteadfast, for as soon as crops failed and horses died, thereby proving the impotence of the white religion, they returned to their old forms of supernatural protection.

The great tension between the Roman Catholic Church and the Indians arose over schools rather than doctrinal affairs. In 1884, seven years after treaty, Father Lacombe had completed the construction of St. Joseph Industrial School at High River near Calgary, and was searching the camps for children untouched by Indian "prejudice," whose minds would be receptive to Christianity. A few parents were induced to part with their children, but a few days later, lonely in their tipis, yearning for the departed child, and preyed upon by gossip about heartless whippings, many an anxious parent went to the school to reclaim his child. The first years tried Father Lacombe's patience severely. Not only were his lambs seized from the fold, but they were a wild lot at best. They gulped the proffered food, refused to go to bed at night, "laughed and sang, and with the Indians' power of ridicule made light of the odd furniture."[1] Father Lacombe,

[1]Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

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angry at the Indians' reception of his work, pleaded with the governmental authorities for suspension of rations of those families that resisted him. He recommended severe treatment for runaways, even to the extent of seeking police assistance in returning them to the schools.

Whether these recommendations fell on deaf ears or whether Father Lacombe recovered from his spleen to find a new solution to his problem, we do not know, but a Roman Catholic school was built on the Blackfoot reserve in 1887. It was hoped that Father Doucet would get better co-operation by bringing the school nearer to the Indians and by having a day-school so that the children could return to their parents every evening. Perhaps a cue was taken from Reverend Mr. Tims who during the previous year had set his mission school on the North Camp flat near the hut of the venerable Old Sun. In his school sixty-five children were enrolled, though only sixteen came with any degree of regularity. Because of antipathy to white ways it was many years before the parents would allow their children to attend even the day-schools freely.

Cattle Days

By the time of Crowfoot's death in 1889 most of the Blackfoot had been induced to plant little patches of oats and potatoes. The 311 acres under cultivation in 1892 were supposedly supplying food for 1,458 Blackfoot. Yet the Indian habits were peculiarly tenacious. These people did not live from their gardens, as Governor Laird had hoped nearly fifteen years earlier; rather they lived on rations and sold the crops. At best the oats and potatoes were good and abundant, but this best came infrequently. Though the virgin soil had first been sown with promising results, the succeeding crops were blighted by cold or heat, flood or drought. On the year of the largest planting, oats failed completely, and potatoes were a severe disappointment. Indeed, even the industrious white who had brought a tradition of gardening to a semi-arid region fared similarly up and down the Great Plains. The Indians, though dependent on these crops for trading at the store, evaded where possible the drudgery of the work, and followed the cycle of ploughing, seeding, cultivating, and harvesting with little enthusiasm. Their gardens were not a success. Moreover, the Indians were for the most part poorly nourished and badly clad. Disease had already reduced their number by more than a quarter in a single decade.

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621 river to live and grow rich without the help of White Pup. Old-
178 Woman-at-War left Running Rabbit to care for cattle in his own establishment. In a rage Hind Bull drove out his loyal follower Black who a few years later made a good living on the proceeds from his cattle. By 1910, when the agricultural economy began on the reserve, many a chief's follower had departed.

511 The extreme poverty of the people must be considered an important factor in these changes.[A] As compared with the Blood and Piegan, the Blackfoot were backward. The superintendent of Indian Affairs, James A. Smart, stated in 1900 that of 165 Indian shacks only 46 had shingle roofs, with 44 still no flooring but the beaten earth. Water had to be procured from the Bow River, frequently at a distance of several miles. There were many Indian ponies on the reserve, but they had little market value except for the year or two when Klondike prospectors were buying. Though wagons increased from 36 in 1898 to 148 in 1906, many people still had travois as the only means of transportation. Despite the advent of hay-cutting at the turn of the century, there were only 12 horse rakes and 17 mowers. In 1897, a year not peculiar for its difficulties, more than $25,000 worth of woollen goods was distributed by a Department of Indian Affairs not reputed for its lavishness. Even with rations provided, the Blackfoot were living at an economic standard below that of the most humble whites. At times they were even accused of begging from the whites in town and scheming to swindle the government. When Countess Minto visited the reserve in 1900, Commissioner Laird was vastly relieved that the Indians behaved respectfully and did not trouble the noble lady with complaints. Agent after agent might report in proud phrases signs of progress in neat and well-furnished shacks, but this progress was always judged with the tacitly appended statement: "in consideration of the fact that these Indians have lived only twenty years on the reserve." When a new inspector without knowledge of the past visited the reserve, he viewed affairs in a different light. A. J. Markle, the new agent of 1901, was appalled at the slovenly conditions.

871 The Indians were irritated by the effort to take the children away
[787] and teach them to be whites. The Church of England had introduced many small schools to the band villages on the theory that through education the aborigines could be shown the road to progress. Resistance, though reduced in fifteen years of contact, ran

[A] [i.e., changes in band structure--Analyst]

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Though open hostility is rare, the usual white attitude towards the Indians can be easily tapped. One white commented:

> They are a lazy lot, shiftless. You give an Indian a dog, and he will have it starved and beaten into submission in a week, so that it will snap at your heels. They would take the race horse Man-of-War and wear him down. Oh, there are some good ranchers, but most of them don't do any work.

Besides indolence and carelessness with property, begging and stealing are common vices attributed to the Indians. Because whites think they have lax standards of cleanliness, restaurant keepers discourage Indian patronage, saying that to serve them would drive away their main clientele. Of course, whites do grant Indians a role of sorts in the community, in addition to their role as cash customers. During tourist season they are important attractions for people from the east who wish a glimpse of the red man. Accordingly, Indians are encouraged to wear buckskin costumes, live in tipis, participate in parades and put on travois races during frontier day celebrations in near-by towns. The local white response to these efforts is mild interest in barbaric splendour mingled with amusement at their "childish" ways.

Most Indians have reacted to this reception by avoiding contact wherever possible. Thursday after pay-day at the agency is usually an Indian day in Gleichen when whites stay away, while Saturday is primarily a white day and Indians remain on the reserve. The mission churches follow this pattern by providing separate hours for the Indian and white services. When conveniently possible, Indians avoid white stores and restaurants, preferring to trade with Chinese proprietors who do not show any expectation of subservience.

When contact is unavoidable, various tensions may arise. A white in a soft-drink establishment, unable to contain his anger when an Indian accidentally prevented him from glancing at the newspaper, cursed and threatened the offending Indian who "did not know his place." Indian tension is probably greatest when white courts sit in judgment upon them. Though many Indians are able to address the magistrate in English, they prefer to separate themselves by speaking through an interpreter.

In the face of this friction and the greater wealth of whites, many Indians make high demands for services rendered to whites. A white's automobile stuck in the mud was pulled out by an Indian for two dollars instead of the fifty cents that was offered. Some of

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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and propagated in at least one of the schools by prohibiting communication in Blackfoot. After a year the children are usually able to write simple sentences in English and by the fifth year compose simple stories. A periodical put out by the Roman Catholic school contains news of the school and specimen compositions by the children. There are also stories written in Blackfoot by one of the fathers who employs a semi-phonetic system of rendition. Unfortunately few Indians can read this material, since this system of writing Blackfoot is not taught in school. In addition to classes in religion, Christianity is taught through contact with the teachers, daily attendance at chapel, and witnessing the celebrations of feast days. The memorizing of prayers and catechism aids both English usage and religious indoctrination. Later, participation in the service as acolytes familiarizes the boys with church ritual. From the beginning children are taught the use of tooth-brushes, bathtubs, and other non-Indian paraphernalia. As they grow older, increased responsibility is given in the maintenance of the school. A boy may begin at seven with sweeping the dormitory and by seventeen be in charge of the milk cattle. Similarly, a girl may be first required to help set the table, while her older sister bakes bread in the school kitchen. These duties acquaint the young with white techniques of living which are intended for later use in reserve life.

Association with children of one's own age fits nicely into the Blackfoot pattern of age-grading. As in former times, school children call their class-mates "comrade," this term applying to both females and males. Between comrades sharing and co-operation is expected. They exchange gifts, make joint expeditions to town on Saturday, and work together in the school vegetable garden. Thus reinforced by the culture, one's class-mates usually become special associates for life. As young men, comrades play pool, gamble, seduce women, and get drunk together. Women, whose activities are circumscribed by the household, have less opportunity to continue contacts with their female comrades. We have evidence of the continuation of informal inter-age-grade rivalry and joking, but little of solidarity between alternate age-grades.

Normally school life continues until eighteen for boys. In the interest of morality school authorities see that girls are married before leaving school. Boys have usually been away from school a few years before marrying. After a maximum of eleven years in school the children have nominally completed eight grades. Actually

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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personal effects for himself or his household. He willingly assumes the burden of care for the aged, as this gives him further prestige through generosity. Only when age curtails his activity can he look for someone to take his place.

From abnegation of the past one becomes a devotee. Old men are paid by the middle-aged to retell stories of war and camp life in the buffalo days. The feats of one's father and grandfathers are venerated so that in comparison the new generation seems inferior. A strong urge comes to revive and relive these times. This is the present position of much ceremonial life, and people participate eagerly. It is a sign of accomplishment to have owned many sacred bundles and joined many societies. Opportunities are sought out to wear buckskin clothing and display one's knowledge of the past. Considerable rivalry exists among authorities to tell the true version of a well-known tale. Of course, the lingering survivors of buffalo days have the upper hand, and to be a person who can still recite *coups* guarantees great respect. Substitute *coups* for those born too late have been adopted, as when a visitor on the Crow reserve seized a knife or a sugar bowl from his host or when a gun was stolen from the unoccupied cabin of a white man. These substitutes, however, remain officially unsanctioned, and old men frequently come from great distances to tell authentic *coups* requisite for proper validation of a ceremonial step.

In the face of these changes one may ask whether white ways lure people away from the approved Indian pattern. Because of the solidarity with the past and with people of one's own kind, total conversion is rare. Some who have given up the hospital for a medicine man later return to the hospital. Former members of sacred societies may attend church services. In this sense conversion occurs, but this is only partial and indeed thoroughly permissible conduct for a devotee of Indian ways. We have observed only two immutable requisites for acceptable Indian conduct. First, the obligations of a social role within the extended family must be observed. Though one septegenarian convert to the Anglican church attended no ceremonials, he was respected for fulfilling his obligations as the eldest in an extended family. Another was a member of a sacred society but was thoroughly despised because of his failure to be generous towards his relatives and to work diligently to fulfill his obligations. Second, there should be no active sabotage of Indian ways. Another elderly convert to the Anglican church fulfilled his social obligations

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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in every respect, yet he sought actively to convert others to his faith. This was regarded as dangerous and caused considerable friction until he ceased to proselytize. No doubt other criteria of acceptable conduct for a devotee of Indian ways can be found, but considerable latitude of deviation seems to be tolerated, as was also the case in buffalo days.

Let us observe finally what effect these changes have had on ceremonial structure. First we see the collapse of the old structure of age-societies. Though four of the societies still exist, their character has been radically altered. The Prairie Chickens society last changed hands during the early twenties, was danced a few times at the Sun Dance camp, and then practically ceased to function. Its members, who are now in their early thirties, have little interest in Indian ways, and whenever the older men encourage them to hold a dance, they maintain they are too busy. In winter time the members occasionally hold a dance in Crowfoot Hall, but here the newer dances such as the Owl Dance rather than the traditional Prairie Chicken dance are preferred. The Crazy Dog society, a step higher in the age-grade hierarchy, has shared a similar fate. Though it has danced a few times within recent years, the dance positions were occupied mostly by older men interested in a display rather than the incumbents who were busy farming.

Only the Half Braves, now a society of middle-aged men, continues the tradition of holding an annual dance at the circle camp. This secular society, formerly for much younger men, is now made up of those who have turned to the Indian style of life. There are, however, a number of age-grades represented in its membership of predominately wealthier men. Single members are recruited from time to time from those who would normally belong to the alternate age-grade, and thus the joking derision of the adjacent age-grades can be maintained. Occasionally a society hand game is held where this organized group plays the unorganized survivors of the adjacent age-grades, but this is infrequent. It is possible that in a few years the Crazy Dogs will reorganize similarly taking in some of the at present unorganized middle-aged men of the adjacent age-grades.

The most dramatic change has taken place in the Horn Society. Formerly at the top of the age-grade hierarchy, its members possessed supernatural powers through the ownership of regalia. Today its members are often the forty-year-olds who are just embracing Indian ways. In fact vowing membership in this society may be one of the first signs of a transition. Since the supernatural power of the

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

000 paid $40,000 for the herd. It was the foundation of the famous Wainright, Alberta, herd, now numbering many thousands. Yearly some of them are shipped into the far north, the Peace River country, to interbreed with the huge black buffalo of that woody section. There they thrive under the watchful care of the Northwest Mounted Police.

177 First of our friends to arrive were the Blackfeet. We saw their mile-long caravan heading into the bottom across from us, and I hurried in my skiff to meet them. A number of the leaders of the tribe were down off their horses gathered on the sandy shore. Well clothed, well armed they were—men of impressive dignity. Springing from the skiff, I said: "I come as a messenger from Raven Quiver. He asks Crow Big Feet to come smoke and eat with him."

Stepped forward from the row of them the most keenly, intelligently featured Indian I have ever known—not tall, not heavy, but of a wonderfully dignified appearance. Taking my hand, he said: "You speak our language well, young white man. I am eager to visit with my close friend Raven Quiver. Let us go."

I was eying a white man in the group—slender, dark, bewhiskered, wearing buckskin trousers and blanket capote. Said he to me in Blackfoot and excitedly: "We are in danger. We hear that the Cutthroats (Assiniboines), many of them, are coming with intent to wipe us out."

Said Crow Big Feet to him: "You, Three Persons, absolutely close your mouth. Should the Cutthroats come to fight us, we shall, as we ever have done, make them to cry." And with that he signed to me, "Let us cross."

Two lesser chiefs of the tribe got into the skiff with Crow Big Feet. When we landed Kipp was on the shore to greet them. He and Crow Big Feet embraced, rubbed cheeks, said how pleased they were to meet again. The two others likewise greeted him. We strolled up into our kitchen-dining room where the smoke-and-feast was awaiting our coming. As soon as I could I said to Kipp: "Who is the white man across, named Three Persons?"

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Smiling, he answered: "He is a Frenchman named La Rue. Was studying to become a priest; got let out because of a mix-up with a

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

woman. Ever since has been trailing around with the Blackfeet. Tried to convince them that there are three gods only: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So deridingly they named him Three Persons."

Swimming their horses, rafting their belongings, the tribe crossed the river that afternoon and camped close back of our post. Before they moved out on the Musselshell, Kipp and Crow Big Feet had some serious talks. Kipp convinced him that the buffalo were going fast—a year or two more of them, and then no more.

"And when they, our real food, are gone, what then for us?" he asked one day.

"You will have to take to the white man's ways. Raise grains and white horns for food," Kipp answered.

"*Haiya, haiya!*" the chief exclaimed. "What a nothing existence that will be. Better that, when our buffalo pass, we pass too."

Next to arrive were the Kainahs (Bloods), about a thousand of them under chiefs Running Rabbit and Far-Off-in-Sight. After camping a few days close above our post, they moved out on Big Crooked Creek to hunt.

We did a thriving trade with these two tribes for elk, deer-, antelope, wolf-, and beaver skins until late fall, when they began bringing plenty of new, tanned, prime-furred buffalo robes. They were soon joined, to our great surprise, by Louis Riel and about one hundred families of his Red River, French-Cree mixed bloods, and a thousand or so Crees, led by their chief, Big Bear.

These Red Rivers and Crees arrived when both the Blackfeet and the Bloods had moved in to camp at our post for a few days to trade with us. Both of these tribes were enemies of the Crees. At once the different bands of the *Ikuni Kahtsi* (All Friends warriors society) of each tribe began painting and arming themselves, shouting that they would now completely exterminate the dog-face Crees. Well we knew that, if they did fight, our trade, so prosperously begun, would be ruined. Our hearts were low as Kipp sent word to the Blackfoot, Blood, and Cree chiefs to come and counsel with him. They soon arrived, and so for the first time I saw Big Bear: heavily, dumpily built, face coarse and unintelligent, poorly clothed. So different from the tall, fine-featured, alert, well-dressed chiefs of the

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

near-by mountains, and small game such as rabbits, grouse, porcupines, and beavers were becoming very scarce. It was plainly evident that unless food, and great quantities of it, would be brought out to them, the whole tribe would die from starvation before the coming of another summer.

While I was in Red Paint's camp, the Rev. Prando, S. J., arrived for a talk with its leading men and asked me to be his interpreter. Soon we were thirty or forty gathered in Red Paint's large lodge, as one after another they told of their sufferings and asked the priest in some way to try to get food for them. He replied that he fully realized their needs and would do all that he possibly could for them. In the meantime, he said, they should follow his teachings; having led pure lives, when they came to die, their souls or, as I had to interpret it, "shadows" could go away up in the sky, there join World Maker (God) and ever afterward live happily. And then, concluding, he said impressively: "But mind this: if you fail to live good lives, then, when you die, your shadows will go deep down beneath the ground, down to that bad one, Fire Maker, where he will keep you forever burning."

Followed a long silence, broken at last by Red Paint. Said he, impressively: "Black Robe, the whites can do many wonderful things. I doubt not their ability, when they die, to go to their World Maker, far up in the sky. But look at us: have we wings to enable our shadows to fly up into the blue? No. Impossible for us to go up there. Have we claws like the badger to enable us to dig down to Fire Maker, for him to roast us perpetually? No. Black Robe, it is that, when we die, our shadows walk or ride out to the Sand Hills, north of here, there forever to remain. There to hunt shadow buffalo; roast shadow meat over shadow, heatless fires; live in shadow lodges. That, Black Robe, is what awaits us all. And so, I finish." With that, they all arose and one by one, in silence, left the lodge. And sad and worried was the expression on Father Prando's face.

Well, during the more than fifty years since that time, the priests and other missionaries have failed to change in any way the beliefs of the sun-worshiping Blackfeet tribes. Within the past two months[2]

[2] In the summer of 1936.

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I have attended the impressive ceremonies of the Tobacco Planters society of the Alberta Blackfeet and the medicine-lodge rites of the Alberta Bloods and the Montana Pikunis. I, for one, am glad that they persist in their ancient faith. Their absolute and enthusiastic belief in it—oh, how different from the apathy of white Christian congregations.

Leaving Birch Creek, I returned to Little Dog's camp on Badger Creek and sent Boy Chief to the agency to tell Rutherford and Phemmister that I wanted to have a talk with them. They came long after dark, and I told them why I was there; asked them if the agent, Major Young, was doing anything toward obtaining food for his starving charges; if he had any on hand to give them.

Said Rutherford: "The old devil, he has plenty of shelled corn, brought upriver from Fort Benton, freighted out from there, but what does he do with it? Every mornin' feeds it to his chickens, the Indians standin' by, awful hungry, and lookin' on."

Said Phemmister: "He knows they're starving, but I don't believe he has written to Washington to get grub for them. What you want to do, to get a line on him, is to talk with his clerks, Ed. Garrett and Charlie Warner."

"I don't know them. Perhaps they won't give me the information I want," I said.

"We'll fix it for you to meet 'em anyhow. Come on," Rutherford offered.

We walked down to the agency. Rutherford unlocked the small gate in the stockade and relocked it after we had passed in. The log buildings formed three sides of the square. The clerks had been in bed. They lit a lamp. I was introduced to them, and when I had told them of my mission there they were plainly wary and frightened. But when I had assured them that I would keep to myself the source of what they could tell me, they talked; freely, bitterly they told of Young's cold-blooded supervision of his charges—he a prominent member of an eastern Methodist church. It was that, for some years, in his annual reports to the Secretary of the Interior, he had stated that he was civilizing the Pikunis; making self-supporting farmers of them. Ha! Civilizing them! Why, they had rarely come

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Faith of *Ahko Pitsu*[1] (Told by *Ahko Pitsu*)

115 124 Ahko Pitsu ("Returns-with-Plenty"), a wise member of the Pikuni tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Confederacy, has seen seventy-one winters. We have been close friends since the long-ago time of the buffalo. With his wife and grandchildren he lives in a comfortable house furnished him by the Indian agency in Browning, Montana. Though almost blind and quite feeble, he daily feels his way up the road to my home to visit with me. I fill an ancient, blackstone-bowled, long-stemmed pipe with his favorite mixture of tobacco and *l'herbe*, and we smoke and talk. Mostly, he talks and I listen.

●797 As we smoked our first pipe on a recent afternoon, he began: "Of course you remember that Black Robe whom we named Noon Eater, he who spoke and well understood our language."

"Yes, I well remember him. He died long ago in a place of many houses west of the mountains," I answered. He was the Rev. Father Prando, S. J., and a most zealous missionary.

[177] "Well, I once had great argument with Noon Eater and got the

[1] *Ahko Pitsu* is one of the very few surviving friends of Schultz's life in the days of the buffalo. Like many Indians of the old days, he has another name, Chewing Black Bone (*Sikochkeka*), by which he is today universally known and honored on the Blackfoot Reservation. The grandson of two great chiefs of the Pikunis, Only Chief (also called Lame Bull) and Sits-in-the-Middle (known also as Middle Sitter), first and tenth Pikuni signers of the Treaty of 1855, he represents the finest tradition of his noble tribe. The editor of this volume is his adopted son, whom he honored with the name of his paternal grandfather Sits-in-the-Middle (*Ichtutsikiaupi*). Chewing Black Bone is now (autumn of 1961) in his late nineties but, except for blindness, retains all his faculties, and is able to recount with vigor and feeling the stories of his youth and the religious lore of his people.

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best of it," my old friend continued. "He came into my lodge, sat down beside me, and said, 'Ahko Pitsu, my real friend, I have just now learned that you Pikunis believe that, in the very long-ago, one of your ancestors went with the help of certain animals and visited the sun. My friend, such a belief is craziness. No one, white nor Indian, ever did that. It could not possibly be done.'

" 'Noon Eater,' I answered, 'Though you whites are very wise, you are pitifully ignorant about some things that we Indians absolutely know. One of our kind did go to Sun, got great help from him, as I shall now tell you.'

"In that long ago time there was a poor young man whose face was badly scarred. He loved a beautiful girl, and after long seeking for the chance met her one day as she was going to the river for water and said: 'Oh, beautiful one, I love you. I want you to be my wife.'

"Said the girl: 'Oh, you poor, nothing-man, you make me laugh. Well, this I tell you: Get the scars off your face, get it smooth, then I will marry you.' And with that, happily singing, she went on to the river and forgot the poor one's request.

"The poor young man was very sad. After long thinking of his trouble, he said to himself: 'I can get no help here; even our most sacred, powerful, Sun's men cannot help me. I will leave. Travel far. Ask all whom I meet to pity me; smooth my face. Perhaps some one of them will do so.'

"Telling none of his intention, not even his poor father and mother, he set off, traveling west. It was in that very long-ago time when people and animals had a common language. So, meeting a wolverine, he said: 'Oh, you beautifully furred, powerful meat-getter. As you love your woman, your children, I beg you to pity me; help me to get my scarred face smoothed.'

"Said Wolverine: 'Man, that I cannot do. I am sorry that I can't help you. But there are others who have great power. Go see Lynx. Maybe he can help you.'

"Scar-Face met, one after another, Chief Lynx, Chief Elk, Chief Buffalo, and other four-footed chiefs, but not one of them could help him. At last he met Chief Badger, and that striped-faced, wise

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539 177 [797] "That, *Apikuni*, is what I told to Noon Eater, the Black Robe. And then I said to him: 'Noon Eater, you whites are very wise, but of course you don't know everything. You said that no white, no Indian, ever went to Sun. Well, I have now proven to you that one of our ancestors actually did visit him and his family in their island home. So now you can tell your Black Robe and other white friends about it. People are always glad to learn the truth about the various matters that interest them.'

"*Ha!* That Noon Eater! He realized that I had bested him. He looked at me, and strangely, then arose and silently went upon his way. I really felt sorry for him."

782 [276] [372] Again I filled the big pipe with the fragrant mixture, passed it to my friend to light. A match would not do: it was not sacred fire. He knelt before the fireplace, with a pair of willow tongs plucked out a coal, placed it upon the pipe, drew in smoke, wafted it skyward, and solemnly chanted: "Oh, Sun! Oh, you Above People! Have [778] pity on us. Give to my friend *Apikuni* here long and full life. Help me to go to my Blackfoot friends when summer comes; be with them when they plant their sacred gardens, for they will then powerfully pray for me."

"So you intend to go up there," I said.

[575] "If I possibly can go. My friend Running Rabbit, a member of the Planters' Society, has invited me. As you know, I suffer from pains in my breast. Daily I pray Sun to give me strength to make the journey."

249 [171] My friend's prayer requires explanation. It is that, from remote time, the Blackfoot Indians have annually planted and harvested, with most impressive ceremonies, a variety of tobacco that they call "*meahwakosis*" (*nicotiana attenuata*). The Blackfoot historians relate that the Mandan Indians, living on the Missouri at the mouth of Knife River, were the original planters and users of it, that the Crow

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000 libretto by Randolph Hartley, was played first in concert form on January 16, 1907, in Pittsburgh, and produced in Berlin by the Royal Opera House. The premier performance there was on April 23, 1910, while the second was attended by the Crown Prince and Crown Princess. The opera had an Indian setting, used Indian musical themes, and was "superbly staged, both as to scenery and costumes."

A, [i.e., a Catholic priest--Analyst]

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result that he soon choked to death. Also, three summers back, a white rancher living near the reservation, disregarding the warnings of the Planters, sneaked into the gardens, had a good look at them, took one of the tobacco plants, and then at the agency bragged of what he had done. With the result that, upon his homeward way, his horse threw him and he died of a broken neck.

Incidentally, because I have been a member of the Pikuni tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Confederacy for more than fifty years, and because my wife is an active member of the *Mahtokiks*, the womens' secret society of its Blood tribe, we were two summers ago invited to take part in the ceremonial rites of the Tobacco Planters and visit their sacred gardens. We were the only white persons ever given that privilege. It was a vastly interesting experience.

But to return to the visit of my friend, *Ahko Pitsu:* We smoked a fourth pipe—four, the sacred number—and then he said to me: "*Apikuni*, friend, write a letter for me, a letter to my Tobacco Planters friend.'

"Yes. Wait until I put a thin leaf in my writing machine. There. Begin."

Running Rabbit, my very close friend.

I have not forgotten your invitation. I am not well. I have pains in my breast. But daily, nightly I pray Sun to keep me alive, at least to enable me to be with you sacred ones when you have your tobacco-planting ceremonies; for I know that your prayers for me will be favored by the Above Ones, so that I will become well and strong again. Yesterday my son drove me over to a grove on Two Medicine Lodges River. There I sacrificed my otter-fur cap to Sun. I tied it to a tree limb and prayed the powerful one to give me strength to go to you when comes next New-Grass Moon (April).

My wife, my children, my grandchildren are well. We hope that you and your loved ones are also well.

Your friend,
AHKO PITSU

Such is the faith of my friend *Ahko Pitsu* and all the other full-blood members of the three Blackfoot tribes. The missionaries of the various white religious sects have made no least dent in it.

ical condition were the Many Tumors and the Scabbies. The former was said to have been named because its members complained of feeling "living things" in their stomachs. Another version was that the name was derived from scabs in their mouths (Legal, 1897). The leader of the band was Medicine Calf, who was known to the Whites as Button Chief. He was an outstanding leader, and, at the time of settling on the reservation, he was considered to be the primary war chief of the tribe. He was particularly remembered as the only leader to try to negotiate a better deal for the Bloods at their treaty with the Canadian government in 1877. After his death in 1884, the band was taken over by his brother, Strangling Wolf.

The origin of the name for the Scabbies band is in doubt. According to one version, they were named because of a prevalence of skin diseases in the band, but another version states that the title reflected their laziness in producing poorly tanned (i.e., scabby) hides. A small band, it was under the leadership of Weasel Bull at the 1877 treaty and later was led by his son-in-law, Bull Shield. The Scabbies were constantly overshadowed by their parent band, the Many Tumors, and after they settled on their reservation, they gradually lost their identity to them.

Most band names were descriptive, often based upon some incident. For example, the Hairy Shirts were named because one of their members, Wood Traveller, wore a shirt made from the skin of a buffalo calf, from which the hair had not been removed. Led by Rainy Chief, it was said to have been the poorest band in the tribe and drew to it persons from other bands who lacked horses and could not keep up with the tribe's constant travels. Balancing the negative aspects of the band's economic status was Rainy Chief's reputation as a holy man. He was considered by missionaries to have been the first Blood leader to embrace Christianity, but informants claim he was simply trying to obtain some of the supernatural power that he believed the White man possessed. After the death of Rainy Chief in 1878, the leadership was taken by his eldest son, White

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37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

A UNIQUE PICTORIAL INTERPRETATION OF BLACKFOOT INDIAN RELIGION IN 1846-1847

by

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ABSTRACT

Sometime in 1846 or 1847 a Blackfoot Indian artist painted for Father Nicolas Point, S.J., an unsigned watercolor depicting various aspects of Blackfoot Indian religious beliefs. The details of this painting are interpreted here for the first time.

In 1846-1847 Father Nicolas Point, S.J., was the first Christian missionary to spend a winter among the warlike Blackfoot Indians on the plains of present-day Montana. Making his headquarters at the American Fur Company's trading post of Fort Lewis, on the Missouri River near the mouth of the Marias, he extended his labors to the hunting camps of the Indians.

Point's own account of his experiences among the Blackfoot was published one hundred and twenty years later under the title, *Wilderness Kingdom, The Journals & Paintings of Father Nicolas Point*, edited by another member of the Jesuit order, Father Joseph P. Donnelly. The text is handsomely illustrated in full color with reproductions of numerous small portraits of Indians and scenes in Indian life executed by Father Point himself, in addition to a few paintings made for him by Indians. The latter are of particular interest because they are the earliest known examples of Blackfoot Indian painting in the white man's medium of watercolor on paper.

Despite the fact that Point was preceded among the Blackfoot by two more talented artists, George Catlin (in 1832), and Karl Bodmer (in 1833), he was the first white artist to portray a number of significant aspects of traditional

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Blackfoot culture. Among these were winter sports of children – whipping tops on ice and sliding down hill on small sleds with runners fashioned of buffalo rib bones; young men playing the hoop-and-pole game; horse racing; use of the horse travois in moving camp and as a step-ladder for pinning the upper portion of a lodge cover during the erection of a tipi; transporting the medicine-pipe on horseback; ceremonial self-torture; antelope, wolf, and eagle trapping; a conical timbered lodge such as was constructed by small horse raiding parties enroute to the enemy camps; and a woman warrior in action (Point 1967: 65, 66, 68, 122, 134, 135, 146, 149, 153, 156).

Father Point was also the first artist to portray many of the roles played by men within the tribal culture. One series of his paintings may be a revelation to students who have believed that "culture and personality" studies were initiated during the twentieth century. They include such character studies as "a man of importance" (proudly arrayed in his colorful, decorated "chief's coat" acquired from white traders); "a medicine man" (painstakingly performing a religious ritual); "a warrior" (probably a horse raider, gun in hand, knife at his waist, and pack on his back); "a young dandy" (liberally applying paint to his face while looking into a mirror); "a story teller" (gesturing with his hands); "a flatterer" (obsequiously rubbing the sleeve of the missionary's garment); "a visitor" (smoking his host's tobacco); "a beggar" (elderly man humbly seeking charity); and "a trader who earns his living by barter" (surrounded by the items he values – a horse, feather bonnet, and fine weapons) (Point 1967: 183, 186-87, 190-91, 195).

There can be little doubt that Father Point's paintings are a substantial contribution toward our better understanding of Blackfoot life and culture of a century and a quarter ago. To my mind, however, the single plate in this remarkable book that is of greatest ethnohistorical significance is the work of an unnamed Indian artist, simply titled "No. 10 Religion, et Superstition," and reproduced in full color on page 113. The editor did not attempt to explain this illustration. Yet I have found that historians and ethnologists who have seen this plate do not appear to be aware of its historic and cultural importance. I reproduce it here (in black-and-white), and offer the following explanation:[1]

This is an unique graphic representation of Blackfoot Indian religion at the time Father Point labored among them in 1846-1847. The man at the upper left must be Father Point himself, the first Christian missionary to the Blackfoot Indians on the Missouri. The word both printed and written on the right of this figure – "ksistokomina" – presumably was inscribed by the missionary. It is doubtful whether any Blackfoot Indian of that time possessed a knowledge of both printing and writing. This native term translates "Thunder Chief."

Thunder Chief must have been the name the Blackfoot gave to Father Point. In a letter to Father Pierre Jean de Smet describing the progress of his work among the Blackfoot, Father Point indicated that these Indians looked upon him and his new religion much as they had regarded their own medicine men. They believed that he had the power to cause or to cure illness, and that baptism was

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37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

not only equivalent to the native sweat lodge, but "that when they had received baptism they can conquer any enemy whatsoever." Furthermore, they believed he could "cause the thunder to roll" when he was not satisfied. Apparently it was this last power, which they attributed to him, that won Father Point his Blackfoot name of "Thunder Chief."[2]

All of the other pictures on this plate refer to aspects of the Indians' traditional religious beliefs – beliefs they had held long before Father Point appeared among them.

The picture at the lower right contrasts most sharply with the Indians' recognition of Father Point as the new Thunder Chief. It depicts the traditional thunder ceremony of the Blackfoot – the medicine-pipe ceremony, performed each spring after the first thunder was heard. As early as 1809 the British fur trader, Alexander Henry, had observed, "Thunder is a man who was very wicked and troublesome to the Indians, killing men and beasts in great numbers. But many years ago he made peace with the Blackfeet, and gave them a pipestem in token of his friendship, since which period he has become harmless" (Henry 1897: II: 366). A well-known tribal myth, recorded by Clark Wissler and David Duvall (1908: 89-90) more than a half-century ago, tells of Thunder's gift of the medicine-pipe to the Blackfoot, along with instructions for the performance of the ceremony in his honor.

The two thunderbirds pictured at the top of this scene were believed to cause thunder and lightning by the flapping of their huge wings. The perspective in the lower portion of this scene is deceptive. Actually the medicine-pipe man is intended to be sitting in front of rather than on top of the dry-painting altar which was specially made for use during the ceremony. He wears the distinctive, club-like headdress of a Blackfoot medicine-pipe man. The German scientist, Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, while he was among the Blackfoot at Fort Mc Kenzie during the late summer of 1833 observed that the medicine men "divide [their hair] into several thick queues all around, and generally bind them altogether with a leather strap, in a thick knot over the forehead" (Thwaites 1904-1907: XXI: 99-100).

The altar for the Blackfoot medicine-pipe ceremony was of dry color upon the ground in front of the pipe-owner, the leader in the ritual. One half was red (at left in the picture), and the other half black (at right). Four feather plumes – two red and two black – were placed upright at the corners of the altar. These characteristics of the altar for the medicine-pipe ceremony are correctly depicted in the artist's scene.

The medicine-pipe ceremony and that of the horse medicine cult among the Blackfoot were closely associated. On the night of March 29, 1943, I witnessed a horse medicine ceremony conducted by Wallace Night Gun, then leader of that cult on the Blackfeet Reservation. The altar prepared, used, and destroyed before the conclusion of that lengthy ceremony was like the one pictured by the unknown Indian artist in his representation of the medicine-pipe ceremony nearly a century earlier (Ewers 1955: 265-66, fig. 33). Wissler has described in

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

532 342 were snake-painted tipis among three of the four major divisions of the Blackfoot – the South Piegan (in Montana), and the North Piegan and Blood (in Canada), while the North Blackfoot had a Big Snake (rattlesnake) tipi. He also described one of these tipis (Wissler 1912: 220-22, 337-38).

[123] Ninety-five years after the unnamed Blackfoot artist pictured a snake-painted tipi, I saw one of them, then owned by Yellow Kidney and his wife, in the sun dance encampment near Browning. The snakes' heads were painted red, and their bodies were alternating blocks of red and green, zig-zagging around the tipi cover against a white background – much as they are pictured by the Blackfoot artist in 1847. The bottom portion of the tipi cover was also painted red with white discs, and three horizontal red bands were painted at the top of the white background of the central portion – as in the earlier artist's rendering. The upper portion (representing the night sky) was painted black, although the small discs within that area (representing stars) were green on the Yellow Kidney tipi, [178] whereas they are white in the artist's version of the snake-painted tipi. It is significant that the design of this painted tipi changed very little over a period of a century, during which it must have been repainted many times on new lodge covers of buffalo cow skin and more recently of white cloth, or canvas.

532 776 821 [773] [796] [178] The crescent-shaped moon (in black) and circular sun (orange) appearing in the left center of the artist's work must be intended to show that Sun and Moon were major supernaturals recognized by the Blackfoot. In the tribal mythology Moon is considered to be Sun's wife, and Morning Star was their son. This relationship is repeatedly referred to in such well-known Blackfoot myths as Scar Face, and The Fixed Star (or The Woman Who Married a Star) – myths which account for the origin of the sun dance, and the symbolism of the sacred digging stick carried by the medicine woman in that most important tribal religious ceremony (Wissler and Duvall 1908: 58-68). On some of the dry-painting altars employed in Blackfoot ceremonies the moon is represented in black paint as in the artist's drawing. But on the sun dance altar it is yellow, with a narrow black center. It is always portrayed as a crescent (Wissler 1912: 254-57).

532 825 [776] This leaves only the small panel at the bottom left of the plate to be interpreted. Perhaps the artist chose to picture the pair of antelopes as a further indication of the variety of sources of supernatural power known to the Blackfoot. The antelope might, of course, have been the artist's own supernatural helper. The Blackfoot knew the antelope as the swiftest of the larger mammals on the plains. Antelope power provided a war medicine. [526] [575] Contenders in the foot races between members of the different men's societies during the summer sun dance encampments also wanted antelope power to enhance their swiftness afoot.

178 [123] [797] [144] I was privileged to live among the Blackfoot Indians in Montana for three and one-half years (1941-1944) nearly a century after Father Point first brought the teachings of Christianity to those Indians. Blackfoot life and culture had changed markedly during the intervening years. By the early 1940s less than 20%

37: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1944) 1972 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

of these Indians were full-bloods. A goodly number had more than one white grandparent. These Indians, with few exceptions, had become Christians – the great majority of them Roman Catholics. Even the oldest of the full-bloods who died during those years received Christian funerals at which a priest or minister officiated in the services in the church and at the cemetery. I served as a pallbearer in several of those services. Yet I noticed that after the white clergyman formally entrusted the body to the earth, it was customary for an aged Indian to step forward and deliver a fervent prayer in his own language, before the assembled mourners dispersed.

During those years no young men fasted and sought visions in isolated localities. There were no painted shields among these Indians, who had not gone to war against enemy tribes for more than a half century. Yet more than a score of veterans of the intertribal wars, their wives, or widows, were still living. They formed the nucleus of that portion of the tribe who gathered each summer to participate in the sun dance. There were nearly a score of painted lodges in the sun dance encampment behind the museum near Browning in 1942. Owners of medicine-pipe bundles still opened them in a ritual manner after the first thunder in spring; and the sacred horse medicine cult was still active. Older full-bloods still recited in fascinating detail the beautiful myths which told of the origins of the medicine bundles and religious rituals of the Blackfoot. Nearly a century after Father Point's pioneer Christian missionary endeavors among these Indians, traditional Blackfoot religion, such as was interpreted by that unnamed artist in 1847, was still very much alive.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to Holt, Rinehart and Winston of New York and to Loyola University Press, Chicago, for permission to reprint this plate.
2. This letter, as quoted by Father De Smet, is not dated. Presumably it was written in 1847 (Smet 1905: III: 953-54).

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course I would not consider even opening the door to the Chief's room—his medicine bundles are in there, and entry is strictly *verboten*. This does not imply any lack of acceptance of me by the Chief; the Chief has never actually forbidden me to enter his room, but if I were to go in there I might inadvertently perform some gesture improper to the sanctity of his medicine, and so we have an unspoken understanding that I will not so dishonor my Indian dad. I would really like to examine the Chief's room, though, and of course he would never know that I had been in there. But I would know.

I was awakened finally at 4:30 A.M. by what I thought was the whining of a dog but which turned out to be the creaking of the outhouse door, blown back and forth by the wind. Strangely enough, two dogs really did appear, about an hour later. Both of them are very thin, and apparently they belong here because they have accumulated in the back yard a collection of deer bones, horses' hooves, and other chewables. Indians generally are not unkind to animals. A Blackfoot legend tells of a young man who was so cruel as to partially skin a female prairie dog alive, and who was haunted by a vision of the poor tormented creature until he became insane. But Indians do not believe in interfering with nature any more than is necessary, and they feel that a horse or a dog that cannot take care of itself is not worth having. The Blackfoots, by the way, never ate dogs, whom they regarded as guardians of the camp, and the Blackfoots looked down their regal noses at those several tribes—Sioux, Assiniboine, Cree, etc.—that habitually consumed dog flesh.

One of the dogs that showed up this morning, a female, looks exactly like a coyote, and she spends most of her time hunting field mice. The other dog apparently is Coyote's pup for he keeps trying to nurse on her although the lazy bum is at least four months old. In lieu of hunting mice for a living, he has chosen the profession of archaeology and has pock-marked the yard with small, inutile excavations. I named him Rascal, because that's what he is.

The old woodstove in the ranch house kitchen now has a small butane burner on top of it, and on this I fried eggs and warmed some tinned beef. The rest of the house appears pretty much as I remember it, but in the living-room I noted two additions: on the table by the Chief's chair is a model of an F-86 jet fighter plane, poised in an attitude of strafing the tabletop, and on the wall is a framed portrait of Jesus with an accompanying pronouncement signed by a Roman Catholic priest that the family of J. White Calf has been consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

With no disrespect intended toward anyone, I could not help smiling at this formal proclamation of the Chief's conversion. In the first place, this is at least the second time that the Chief has been officially accepted as a Roman Catholic; in the second place, the Chief is a Methodist in good standing and is an honorary steward of the Browning Methodist Church; and in the third place, the Chief is at this very minute participating in a Sun Dance, the most important of all *Blackfoot* religious ceremonies. So I am afraid that I shall have to view this documentary evidence of the Chief's new religious status in a common light with the figure-painted chunk of animal hide which is given (sold, rather, unless you happen to be a big-shot politician) to Whites as official documentation of their "adoption" by the Blackfoot Indian Tribe.

The Chief believes (as do I) that worship of the Almighty should bring people closer together, not drive them further apart. The Chief will participate in Christian religious services in the same spirit of syncretism with which a tolerant Christian will attend an Indian Medicine Lodge, and it is important to be aware that this does not imply that there is anything in his religious attitude which suggests either hypocrisy or indulgence. The Chief does genuinely accept the Christian concept, but he does not feel it necessary to abandon his own traditional beliefs in order to do so. Membership in one religious body does not dissuade him from accepting membership amongst yet another denominational group—not any more than the fact of my already having a White father had any effect upon the Chief's adopting me as his own son. The Chief accepts the *New* as a complement to the *Old*, not as a replacement of it, and his religious philosophy thus derives from a blending—a concrescence, so to speak, and hence an enrichment—of the many separate ways in which man searches for a closer relationship both to God and to his fellowman.

Interestingly enough, the precursor of Christian missionary enterprise amongst the Blackfoots was himself an American Indian. Ignace Lamoose, an Iroquois who had attended the Jesuit Mission of Caughnawaga, near Montreal, Canada, was attempting to introduce the elements of Christianity among the Salish (Flatheads) as early as 1830. Old Ignace eventually was killed by the Sioux, but not before his efforts had paved the way for the founding among the Flatheads of the first Roman Catholic mission in the Great Northwest. The mission was inaugurated by the famous Father Jean Pierre DeSmet and two assistants, and according to Jesuit records it was at this mission, on Christmas Day, 1841, that the first Black-

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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foot converts—an old chief and his family—were accepted in Christian baptism by Father DeSmet.

The Roman Catholic missionaries, whom the Blackfoots called "Black Robe Medicine Men," were followed shortly by the Protestants ("Short Coat Medicine Men"): a Methodist, the Rev. Robert T. Rundel, ministered to the Blackfoots at Ft. Edmonton, Canada, in 1840, and a Presbyterian, the Rev. Elkanah Mackey, whose wife was the first White woman to be seen in Blackfoot country, spent a *whole month* at Ft. Benton in 1858.

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Actually, no permanent Protestant mission was established among the Indians of Montana until the 1890's, and this mission was a delayed result of the well-known "Peace Policy" of President Grant. After an attempt to place the Indian Bureau under the jurisdiction of the Army (which probably would have meant the extinction of the Indian) had been defeated in Congress in 1870, Grant's administration decided, incredibly, to allot the several Indian reservations to the influence of various organized church groups. Despite the fact that no Methodist missionary had ever been among the Blackfoots in the United States, the Blackfoot Reservation fell to the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Jesuits, who with the active encouragement of Blackfoot Agent Major Alfred J. Vaughan, himself a Protestant, had already established a mission among the South Piegans, were literally forced to withdraw from the Reservation and to confine their missionary efforts to the wandering Blackfoot bands.

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From the very first, Christian missionaries among the Blackfoot Indians found themselves hoeing a very rocky row. The desire of the Blackfoots to be converted to Christianity did not exactly create a Coney Island crush around the baptismal fount, and there were several very obvious reasons for this. (1) The Blackfoots could not understand the rivalry and dissention among various factions of the same religion (the Black Robes vs. the Short Coats). (2) The Blackfoots could not quite dig a religious attitude which simultaneously venerated motherhood and condemned sex. The shortage of men caused by hunting accidents and constant intertribal warfare made polygamous marriage among the Plains Tribes a social and economic necessity, and those Indians that took one wife in Christian marriage invariably kept a few spares around the teepee (frequently the younger sisters of wife No. 1) in accordance with the Indian concept of matrimony. (3) The Indians were understandably unenthusiastic about religious tenets which condemned two of the primary virtues of traditional Plains Indian culture—the steal-

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ing of horses and the eradication, whenever possible, of one's enemies.

At one point, though, there was no dearth of Blackfoots who earnestly desired to become accepted for baptism into the Roman Catholic Church. In the summer of 1846, Chief Victor and his Flatheads, aided by a dozen lodges of Small Robes (the Small Robes were a rather independent band of Piegans who were friendly toward the Flatheads) achieved a smashing victory over a superior force of Absaroka (Crow) Indians. And when the Flatheads attributed their remarkable success to the power and protection of the "Black Robes' God", this was all the Blackfoots needed to hear. Baptism by the Black Robes was obviously a guarantee of victory over your enemies, and the more bloodthirsty the Blackfoot warrior, the more ardent became his petition for baptism. But since this attitude did not reflect the concept of Christian thought which the good priests of the Church had been attempting to convey, Father Point (the Blackfoots called him "Tusks"), who headquartered on the Missouri River at the American Fur Company's post of Ft. Lewis, recorded that of the 651 Blackfoot Indians he was able in all good conscience to accept for baptism, 625 were children, 22 were women, and only four were grown men.

The foregoing notwithstanding, Roman Catholicism was always more successful than Protestantism amongst the Blackfoots, and it is not difficult to suggest several reasons why this should have been so. Although the old-time Indians could in some measure reconcile the more abstractive philosophy of the Protestants with certain sciotheistic elements of their own religious inheritance, the more tangible paraphernalia associated with Roman Catholic ritual was much more impressive to them, and much more easily identified with aspects of their existing beliefs. During a Blackfoot Sun Dance or Medicine Lodge, buffalo tongue is cut into small pieces and distributed among certain participants; this gesture is in all respects strikingly similar to the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. Also during the Medicine Lodge ceremony, Indian women will step forth and openly confess their sins, and this, of course, suggests the confessional both of the Roman Catholic Church and of the high order of the Episcopal Church. (It is important to realize that these Medicine Lodge ceremonies were not derived from the Christian religion but had their existence before the coming of the White Man.)

From the point of view of the Blackfoot fighting man, two aspects of religious tradition possessed by the Roman Catholics were espe-

cially easy to accept. A crucifix constituted a nifty recruit to the warrior's collection of protective amulets and charms, and when a priest endowed the converted Blackfoot with the name of a Catholic saint, this was to the Indian very much like his own custom of taking a new name (very often the name of a former chief or hero of his tribe) upon the occasion of achieving a significant coup against the enemy. To this day, a substantial number of Blackfoots have as a given name the name of a saint. Offhand I can think of Evangeline Big Beaver, Theresa Bull Child, Dennis Bad-Old-Man, Michael Scabby Robe, Bernard Red Head, Ursula Running Crane, Theola Cut Finger, Bernadette Red Head, Clement Big Springs, Serena Little Dog, Paul Calf Looking, Calvin Kicking Woman, Jason Dusty Bull, Rufus Good Striker, Terrence Little Bull, Angeline Old Person, Maurice Red Horn, Frederick Takes Gun, Francis Bull Shoe, Agnes Comes-At-Night, Woodrow Calf Robe, Anthony Mountain Chief, Tyrone [redacted]ulte Grass, Hiram Daniel Calf Looking, Aaron Skunk Cap . . . There are many others.

The names Joseph and Mary are especially popular here on the Reservation, and the Chief once mentioned that he used to have an aunt named John—which is not at all funny if you know anything about the Blackfoots and their language. Blackfoot names have no sexual connotation, and a female is distinguished from a male by having the suffix *ákí* (woman) added to her name. Incidentally, although popular fiction would have us believe that all Indian maidens are called "Shining Water" or "Morning Star," the truth is that Blackfoot girls, who were (and usually still are) named by a male relative or by some prominent male member of the tribe, were *not* named in imitation of some aesthetic object or experience. They were named in honor of a particularly notable war achievement by the name-giver, and instead of being named "Sweet Prairie Flower," a girl was more apt to go through life as "Kills Instead," "Found A Gun," or "Two Cutter" (the actual Indian names of some very fine Blackfoot ladies of my acquaintance).

Whatever the reason for the success or failure of the early Catholic missionaries, the strength of the Roman Church on the Reservation today (take it from a Protestant who knows) is in the presence here of such men as Father Mallman, the marvelous old Jesuit priest who has been ministering to the Catholic faithful down at Heart Butte for God-knows-how-many years. Father Mallman loves and understands the Blackfoots, and the Blackfoots love and respect the Father in turn. The Catholic congregation at Heart Butte is large and faithful in attendance, and if some members celebrate Mass

539 123 are my son, Last Gun, for I have given to you the name of my father who was Chief White Calf before me and who was called among the Piegans as Last Gun. I have given you the beaded gloves to show that I am glad to have you for my son and I love you as my son, and your brother, Jimmy Eagle Plume, has given you the beaded moccasins to show he is glad to have you for a brother and he loves you for his brother, and now I give you this story, for this is the way it was in the beginning.

539 I am Chief White Calf of the Blackfeet, and I am one hundred and one years old, and I give you this story that I got from my father, Last Gun, who got it from the old men of the tribe. I am one hundred and one years but I am not old, for when I was a young man and hunted the buffalo and made war on the Crees and Assiniboines and Crows and counted coup on them and stole their horses I was never afraid because Nah-tóh-sey came to me in a dream and told me that I would live a long time but I would never be old. But he gave me just so long to live and I don't know when I will die, so I give you this story so it will not be lost. No other of the Blackfeet know this story because I have not told them, because it is the true story of how things were in the beginning and it is given by the Chief to his son so it will not be forgotten. You are my son, and I am White Calf, Chief of the Piegan Blackfeet and I give it to you.

●[799] Only once before I tried to give this story. There was a missionary and I called him son and gave him a name and tried to give him this story but he would not take it because he said that this is not the way things were in the beginning. But I was not proud to have him for my son because he says there is only one path through the forest and he knows the right path, but I say there are many paths and how can you know the best path unless you have walked them all. He walked too long on one path and he does not know there are other paths. And I am one hundred and one, and I know that sometimes many paths go to the same place.

Hear me, you are my son, Last Gun, and I know you will tell this story the way I tell it to you and not change it the way White men do, and so I give this story to be yours, for this is the way it was in the beginning.

In the beginning there were just two of them, a Man and a Woman, and they made the whole world. There were no oceans at the beginning of the world, and there were no mountains and no trees and no rivers that flow into the oceans.

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Two Guns White Calf in Later Life

on the Milk River [the Teton], and I was born there on May 10, 622
1857. I know the exact spot where I was born because it was the cus-
tom of our people to wait until a child was old enough to remember [823]
clearly—when the child had attained the age of perhaps five or six [828]
years—and then to take the child back to the place of his birth and to
rub his head in the dirt so that the memory of his birthplace would
stay with him always. Most Indians of my generation did not know 622
the exact date of their birth, but I know my birthday because when I 797
was born there was a Jesuit priest visiting our camp and the priest
recorded my birth in his book. When I was quite a bit older, this
same priest visited my family once again, and it was at this time
that he christened me James. I do not know the priest's name in
English; we Piegans knew him by his Indian name, Marten Cap"
(in all probability, Father Imoda).

I knew that the Chief's father had been Onistáipokah, who later 622
became Head Chief of the Piegans, and that his mother had been
Black Snake Woman, but I had very little actual knowledge of the
Chief's siblings and I asked him if he would tell me something about
his brothers and sisters.

"I had five brothers and five sisters. All of us boys were named 622
Gun: my eldest brother, who was known as Wolf Tail, was named 551
Strange Gun; I was second eldest, and my name was Last Gun,
which was the name of my father, although later on my uncle, Run-

we had a good chase and brought back many robes and plenty of meat. But this year the herds did not return, and although some of us went deep into the Crow country, we found only a few scattered groups of buffalo—barely enough to feed us on the hunt.

The buffalo were gone, and although there had been other years when we did not find the big herds, this year the old people all knew that the herds would never come again. For them, the old people, it was as though the sun had disappeared from the sky. The old ladies dug wild turnips and gathered wild rhubarb and such berries as they could find, but there was no fat with which to make pemmican for the months ahead. Some of them ate prairie dogs and foxes and badgers and anything else they could trap, and some of the old men just sat in their lodges and waited.

During a pause, I asked the Chief if the Agency had not issued rations to the Indians. He continued his fragmented but informative narration:

The Agency issued rations, but not nearly enough to keep a person alive. Each week they gave out a little flour and sugar and sometimes a small piece of meat. On Friday they would butcher maybe two or three cows from the Agency herd, and they would distribute the meat on Saturday, which was ration day at that time. But when you divide a couple of beeves up amongst about three thousand people, nobody gets very much. Thursday we called Nothing-Happens-Day, because by then all the people would be starving and just sitting around waiting for the next rations. Every day people died of starvation, and a lot of others died because they were too weak to resist pneumonia and other diseases. [Father Prando, who had established a small mission just south of Birch Creek, the southern boundary of the Reservation, reported at this time that a serious epidemic of erysipelas was proving fatal to many of the enfeebled Piegans.]

I am not ashamed to admit that it was difficult and even painful for me to ask the Chief direct questions about the Starvation Year, but I knew that this was probably the last opportunity that I or anyone else would have to record an intelligent, eyewitness—indeed,